The Somatics of Liberation:
Ideas about Embodiment in Buddhism from Its Origins to the Fifth Century C.E.

A dissertation presented

by

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Abstract

Previous scholarship on Buddha-bodies has given excessive, teleological pride-of-place to the doctrine of *trikāya* ("three bodies"), and as a result, has paid insufficient attention to a broad range of other relevant ideas, especially ideas about bodies of beings other than Buddhas, or bodies not named *kāya*. As a result, our received history of ideas about the body in Buddhism is fundamentally inaccurate. This dissertation therefore proposes a through revision of this history.

Most notably, there is not sufficient evidence to believe that any significant concept of positive, adequate, ideal embodiment of Buddhist liberation is entertained in the period down to the close of the Pāli canon. Inscriptional evidence strongly suggests that the earliest identifiable such positive embodiment of Buddhahood is to be found in the relics of the Buddha. The very notion of positive, adequate embodiment of Buddhahood therefore seems to originate in relic-centred cultic practice around the turn of the Common Era. Subsequently, in Mahāyāna and the Mainstream "Schools", a whole range of new ideas about ideal embodiments emerges, including, centrally, the ideas that Buddhahood is most veritably embodied in gnosis (*bodhi, jñāna*); or in the "Absolute" (*dharmadhātu* etc.); or (eventually, immortally) in adamant (*vajrakāya*). Early Mahāyāna texts are more central than has been recognised to the rise of new, positive ideas embodiments, which are connected with a broader Mahāyāna shift towards greater emphasis on immanence. Mainstream "Schools" most likely follow rather than pioneer these developments. Subsequently, still further development gives rise to a range of further

ideas among which is *trikāya* doctrine itself; and the significance of *trikāya* doctrine is very different when regarded in the context of this revised narrative.

The arguments of this dissertation should thus bring about a fundamental revision of our understanding of ideas about Buddha-bodies and the history of their development, while also bearing broader implications for our understanding of the relationship between the Mahāyāna and Mainstream materials, especially those of the "Schools" (esp. Mahāsāṃghika and Sarvâstivāda). The Buddhist ideas studied here also have implications for broader comparative questions, including the nature and significance of the problematic of embodiment in cross-cultural perspective.

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Abbreviations

In footnotes I have used abbreviated titles of articles and books by secondary scholars. I have endeavoured in all cases to make sure that these abbreviations are intuitive and memorable, and that it will be possible to identify the item and retrieve its full bibliographic details by referrence to the bibliography. Such abbreviations are not included in the following list.

AK(Bh)	*Abhidharmakośa*(*-bhāṣyam*)
AN	*Anguttara-nikāya*
Aṣṭa	*Aṣṭasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā-sūtra*
Ch.	Chinese
DA	*Dīrghâgama*
DhDhV	*Dharmadharmatāvibhānga*
DhP	*Dhammapada*
DN	*Dīgha-nikāya*
EA	*Ekottarâgama*
Iti	*Itivuttaka*
JñP	*Jñānaprasthāna*
LAn	*Lokânuvartana-sūtra*
MA	*Madhyamâgama*
Mil	*Milindapañha*
MN	*Majjhima-nikāya*
MPNS	*Mahāparinibbāna-sutta* (DN 16), or *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra*
MPPŚ	**Mahāprajñāpāramitā-śāstra* = 大智度論
MSA	*Mahāyānasūtrâlaṃkāra*
MSg(Bh)	*Mahāyānasaṃgraha*(*-bhāṣyam*)
MSgU	*Mahāyānasaṃgrahôpanibandhana*??
MV	*Mahāvastu*
P.	Pāli
Pañca	*Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā-sūtra*
Praj.	Prajñāpāramitā
RGV	*Ratnagotravibhāga*
SA	*Saṃyuktâgama*
SdhN	*Saṃdhinirmocana-sūtra*
Skt.	Sanskrit
SN	*Saṃyutta-nikāya*
Śrim	*Śrimālādevīsiṃhanāda-sūtra*
SuN	*Sutta-nipāta*
ThaG	*Theragāthā*
ThiG	*Therīgāthā*
Tib.	Tibetan
Vaj	*Vajracchedikāprajñāpāramitā-sūtra*
Vibh	**Mahāvibhāṣā*
VP	Louis de la Vallée Poussin
XZ	Xuanzang 玄奘

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my mother,

Kay Switzer,

mindful of her gifts to me of body, speech and mind.

CHAPTER ONE: GENERAL INTRODUCTION

"But the body is deeper than the soul and its secrets inscrutable."
--- E. M. Forster[1]

"Not only are you not disgusted at your own foulness, you glutton for crap, you yearn for other vats of filth!"
--- Śāntideva[2]

"Look, O Monks, at the body of the Tathāgata; behold, O Monks, the body of the Tathāgata."
--- *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra*[3]

This dissertation is a study of some ideas about the body in Buddhism. Its first aim is to present a new understanding of the history of those ideas to the fifth century, and within that period, it differs greatly from the received vision of that history on many important points. Beyond the limited scope of the concrete range of ideas and texts it manages to study, it also attempts to set up a better framework within which to approach the question of the body in Buddhism more generally.

In the pursuit of the first of these two aims, this dissertation spans the period from the inception of our record of Buddhism down to approximately the fifth century. Within this vast expanse of time and the vast body of Buddhist texts that survive from it, I am of course selective, and this study makes no pretence at having exhausted the relevant material in this period.[4]

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1 E. M. Forster, *Maurice* (Bungay, Suffolk: Edward Arnold, 1971), 108.

2 *Bodhicaryâvatāra* 8.61, Crosby and Skilton 93.

3 *avalokayata bhikṣavas tathāgatasya kāyaṃ; vyavalokayata bhikṣavas tathāgatasya kāyaṃ.* Waldschmidt, E., *Das Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra Teil III* (Berlin 1951), §42.10; cited in Roth, "Physical Presence" 293.

4 I briefly describe the criteria that have governed the selection of the texts I treat in this Introduction below, and I also address some of the more significant remaining lacunae in the section suggesting directions for future research in the General Conclusion.

In pursuit of the second aim, I attempt to ground this dissertation on a definition of the problem of embodiment that takes as its primary terms of reference actual, real-world human experience of the body, and not this or that specific *term* for the body (particularly the term *kāya*). This results in an immediate and significant expansion of the purview of the project. As a result, at least half of the concrete content of this dissertation engages with topics that studies to date have not considered under the aegis of the problematic of embodiment.

This General Introduction to the dissertation as a whole comprises four main sections. (1) I will first describe the state of prior secondary literature on the problem of embodiment in Buddhism. I will disagree with many of the most important components of the received views contained in this literature, and so this section of the Introduction can also be understood as a summary characterisation of my foils. (2) Next, I will list in summary form the major theses of this dissertation. My main purpose in providing this summary list is to enable readers to discern as clearly as possible the numerous points upon which I differ from the views my foils. (3) I will then lay out the general considerations of methodology that have governed my working method in this dissertation, and describe aspects of the resulting method. (4) Finally, I will give an outline of the dissertation as a whole.

1.1 Problems in the study of the problem of embodiments in Buddhism to date

Much of this dissertation is motivated, directly or indirectly, by disagreement with what I take to be the standard received view of the history of ideas about the bodies of the Buddha. In what follows, I will therefore first present a composite characterisation of this standard view.[5]

[5] This view is nowhere laid out in precisely the form I will give it here. My characterisation is rather a distillation and summary of important ideas that I think are accepted, in most cases almost universally, by all the important secondary accounts of Buddha-body doctrine to date. For important and representative secondary studies upon the basis of which I have constructed this composite, see:

In this standard view, the precise point of departure for the development of ideas about the Buddha's bodies is usually somewhat hazy. Apparently for reasons less historical than ideological (the assumption that early Buddhism must have been "rational"), some writers assume that the initial point of departure must have been an understanding that the Buddha had only one body, i.e. the ordinary, given, human, fleshly body in which he lived out his final earthly lifetime as the rest of us live. Other writers simply pick out one or more early conceptions of special bodies, such as the "body made of mind" (*manomayakāya*, Ch. 2.3) or the body of the thirty-two marks of the great man (*mahāpuruṣa,* Ch. 3.1). They usually discuss these early conceptions as supposed antecedents of individual later bodies (here, usually *nairmāṇikakāya* and *sāṃbhogikakāya* respectively). They do not generally attempt to coordinate the various facts so treated into any overall picture of coordinated notions about the Buddha's embodiments as a whole at any given time.[6]

All writers agree, however, in thinking that they already see in early canonical materials a prototypical concept of *dhammakāya* (= *dharmakāya,* the Buddha's embodiment in *dharma*). It is standard to adduce in support of this understanding a handful of disparate passages, including of course the single instance of the term *dhammakāya* in the Pāli canon (see Ch. 3.2). Though it is not often stated so clearly, the implication is that from the stage at which this prototypical

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Akanuma, "Triple Body"; Demiéville, "Busshin"; Guang, *Concept of the Buddha*; Habito, "Busshin ron no tenkai"; la Vallée Poussin, "Appendice" (to *Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi*); Nagao, "On the Theory"; and Takeuchi, "Buddakan". Important aspects of this standard narrative are also reflected in Harrison, "Real Phantom Body", and Makransky, *Buddhahood Embodied,* and these two works also comprise important foils for parts of my argument in this dissertation.

[6] On the question of the point of departure for this history, Louis de la Vallée Poussin alone sees right from the very start a threefold model (a "primitive triad") of *dhammakāya, manomayakāya* and *pūtikāya;* "Appendice" 764-766. This understanding is deeply flawed. See §3.2.6 for a direct critique of parts of this model; Ch. 2.3 for an analysis of *manomayakāya* which shows that it is not conceived of primarily as a special body of the Buddha; also, of course, Ch. 3.2 and esp. §3.2.5.

dhammakāya is evident, at least two modes of embodiment are predicated of the Buddha: the *dhammakāya,* and his ordinary fleshly body.

On the whole, then, consideration of the problem of embodiment in the early period is usually restricted to the unsystematic piecemeal identification of possible precedents for later conceptions.

A much clearer picture is usually presented at the next supposed phase in the development of ideas about the Buddha's bodies. All writers agree, implicitly if not explicitly, that the next phase is to be sought in the ideas of Mainstream Buddhism "schools" – in particular, in two schools, the Sarvâstivāda and the Mahāsāṃghika/Lokôttaravāda. The pertinent ideas identified as originating in each of these schools respectively are treated as vaguely contemporaneous, presumably precisely in virtue of their both being ideas of "schools".

Usually scholars say that the Sarvâstivāda originated the idea that the Buddha had two bodies, a *rūpakāya* ("body of visible material substance") and a *dharmakāya*. The early Mahāyāna (usually Prajñāpāramitā) is supposed to have passively inherited this model from them. Between the supposed Sarvâstivāda origination of this idea and its early Mahāyāna acceptance, the received view thus understands that there was a long phase in which a two-body model of the Buddha's embodiment was widespread and influential.

The standard view also often features a particular characterisation of the *dharmakāya* as it enters into this "pre-Mahāyāna" two-body model. This component of the standard view has become especially widely current since Paul Harrison framed influential arguments about a putative "Mainstream *dharmakāya*" in a seminal article entitled "Is the *Dharmakāya* the Real

'Phantom Body' of the Buddha?"[7] This understanding of the *dharmakāya* seems to be an uncertain and partially unexamined hybrid of (1) the idea that *dhamma* in the supposed *dhammakāya* of the Pāli materials refers to the teachings; and (2) the observation that Sarvâstivāda Abhidharma texts usually characterise the *dharmakāya* in terms of some set of qualities of the Buddha (*buddhadharmas*). Thus, it is thought that the notion of "the *dharmakāya*", prior to a supposed Mahāyāna reworking, refers to the Buddha's embodiment in either his teaching, or a plural set of perfected qualities that characterises him, or both.

The Mahāsāṃghikas, or often their subsect the Lokôttaravādins, are usually attributed with the origination of a docetistic Buddhalogy, on which the Buddha's final earthly body, and his acts in it, are understood to be a mere show for the purpose of saving sentient beings, while his true being is by implication thought to be otherwise and elsewhere. This idea is often identified as an important precedent of the *nairmāṇikakāya* of the *trikāya* triad.

In the next phase discerned in this history by the standard narrative, as I have already mentioned, the two-body model supposedly originating among the Sarvâstivāda is thought to have been passively received by the early Mahāyāna. However, scholars differ to some extent on the nature of the early Mahāyāna *dharmakāya* as it featured in this supposed Sarvâstivāda-derived twofold model.

In the paper already mentioned immediately above, Paul Harrison claims that what he calls the "Mainstream *dharmakāya*" continues unmodified for a considerable period in the early Mahāyāna, and is only replaced much later than was previously thought by the more

[7] Harrison, "Real Phantom Body". This vision of the supposed "Mainstream *dharmakāya*" is thus an important target of the arguments of this dissertation. See especially §4.3.13 of this dissertation, where I summarise arguments against Harrison's thesis advanced throughout Ch. 4.3, Ch. 3.2 and Ch. 4.2. Ch. 4.4 also advances considerations that undermine aspects of Harrison's thesis.

characteristically "Mahāyāna" *dharmakāya.*[8] On the other hand, many earlier scholars seem to have thought that in the early Mahāyāna (usually meaning Prajñāpāramitā), the notion of *dharmakāya* was immediately reworked to refer to a conception of the Buddha's embodiment in the Mahāyāna "absolute" (most typically, *dharmatā,* or the intrinsic nature of *dharmas*; the *dharmadhātu,* or "*dharma* element/realm"; *tathatā* or "Thusness", etc.). Some scholars, indeed, push this understanding back even further, and think that inklings of it can already be discerned in the supposed Pāli-canonical *dhammakāya.*

These shades of difference aside, it is fair to say that scholars generally accept that an originally Sarvâstivāda twofold model of the Buddha's embodiment was adopted by early Mahāyāna. As part of this process, the Mahāyāna is supposed thereafter to have reworked the *dharmakāya* as it entered into that model, so that the concept came to refer to the Buddha's embodiment in or identity with the Mahāyāna "absolute". The general view is thus largely in agreement on the important moments and general outline of the development of ideas about embodiment in Buddhism to this point, and this prepares the ground for the doctrine of *trikāya* or "three bodies", which is universally treated as the centrepiece of that history.

Trikāya doctrine, as is well known, appears first among the Yogācāra in the fourth century, and is first attested, to our knowledge, in the *Mahāyānasūtrâlaṃkāra.* It holds that the Buddha is embodied in three modes or forms. To summarise this doctrine briefly, in an oversimplified form:

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[8] Harrison's arguments have been influential. This influence may be discerned, for instance, in the frequent citation of his article without further comment where the question arises of the early Mahāyāna *dharmakāya,* and in the frequent and perhaps now even usual tacit acceptance of his claims indicated by the adoption of the translation "body of/embodiment in *dharmas*", where *dharmas* is in the plural.

(1) The first, truest and most intrinsic of the Buddha's embodiments is variously conceived of as the *dharmakāya;* or as his *svābhāvikakāya* or "embodiment in essence" (his own essence, which is also the essence of all things).[9] This embodiment is ineffable to all but the Buddha himself (to buddhahood itself).

(2) The Buddha is also understood to be embodied visibly and tangibly, for certain lucky beings, in various *sāṃbhogikakāya* (later also *saṃbhogakāya* , *vipākakāya* etc.) or "embodiment(s) for [common] enjoyment". This is the kind of body in which the Buddha appears among assemblies or congregations (*parśanmaṇḍala*) of advanced *bodhisattvas* and preaches the Dharma both for his own and their enjoyment. It bears the thirty-two marks of the "great man"[10] and is generally physically perfect.

(3) The Buddha is also understood to be embodied in a host of *nairmāṇikakāya* or "embodiments produced by magical emanation" (if in the least authentic and most attenuated sense among these three embodiments). These bodies are the product of the Buddha's supernatural powers, and he elaborates them out of compassion for ordinary suffering sentient beings, in order to teach them and lead them in various ways to liberation. This kind of embodiment refers most stereotypically to the Buddha's embodiment in this Sahā world, particularly his most recent incarnation as Śākyamuni in India around the fifth century B.C.E. The notion of *nairmāṇikakāya* necessarily binds up within itself an understanding that this kind of embodiment is a docetistic show.

[9] The characterisation of this embodiment as *svābhāvikakāya* is especially common in the earliest versions of *trikāya* doctrine.

[10] According to Makransky, only from the *Abhisamayâlaṃkāra* onwards; *Buddhahood Embodied* 106.

On the standard view, *trikāya* is quite reasonably understood as an attempt to systematise, synthesise or otherwise make coherent sense of a number of ideas about the Buddha's embodiments that had arisen in the period leading up to it. Most notable among the ideas that enter into this synthesis are: (1) the idea of embodiment in the Mahāyāna absolute; (2) ideas about the bodies of cosmically remote Buddhas; and (3) the docetistic interpretation of the Buddha's last earthly body, respectively.

The standard view also, with some partial and unsystematic exceptions, regards the emergence of *trikāya* doctrine as an effective endpoint of interesting development in the question of embodiments of the Buddha. *Trikāya* is understood to have rapidly attained the status of an orthodoxy, which stabilised and dominated the question of the embodiments of the Buddha thereafter. For this reason, the secondary literature usually leaves off the examination of the question of Buddha-bodies at this point in its history.

This dissertation will argue that this standard account is wrong in almost all its significant component claims, misguided in its emphasis, and misleadingly partial in the way it conceives of the scope of the problem.

To begin with, I contend that this standard account is wrong on the following points of fact, taken roughly in the order in which they appear in the above summary.[11]

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[11] My intention here is to summarise these points of difference with the standard narrative in the most concise form possible. For the benefit of readers interested in pursuing my detailed reasons for one or another particular point of difference, I provide cross-references to the relevant sections of the body of this dissertation in footnotes to each. I will summarise the positive theses I suggest should replace these erroneous understandings immediately below (§1.2).

- Neither the *manomayakāya* ("body made of mind") nor the body of thirty-two marks is exclusively or even primary a special body *of the Buddha*.[12]
- There is no real conception of **dhammakāya* in the Pāli canon.[13]
- There is no evidence that any identifiably Sarvâstivāda or Mahāsāṃghika/Lokôttaravāda ideas about the Buddha's embodiments predate early Mahāyāna ideas of same.[14] Thus, there are no grounds for assuming a "schools" phase of development, prior to Mahāyāna, in the development of ideas about Buddha-bodies.
- Docetistic Buddhalogy, in particular, cannot be shown to be a Mahāsāṃghika/Lokôttaravāda idea at its origin.[15]
- The Sarvâstivāda Abhidharma in fact shows no interest in the *dharmakāya* prior to the **Mahāvibhāṣā,* by which date the most likely explanation for its incorporation into Sarvâstivāda doctrine is that it is received *from* Mahāyāna, not *vice versa*.[16]
- Neither does the Sarvâstivāda predicate a *rūpakāya* of the Buddha, at least as late as the **Mahāvibhāṣā*.[17]
- Even if we look outside Sarvâstivāda, the two-body model opposing *dharmakāya* and *rūpakāya* is unlikely to be older than the third century C.E., and there is no

[12] For the *manomayakāya,* see Ch. 2.3; for the body of marks of the *mahāpuruṣa/mahāpurisa,* see Ch. 3.1.

[13] See Ch. 3.2.

[14] For the Mahāsāṃghika, see Ch. 4.2, esp. §§4.2.3-4.2.6. For relevant Sarvâstivāda ideas, see Ch. 4.4, and esp., on dates, §§4.4.1 and 4.4.11.

[15] See, once more, Ch. 4.2.

[16] See once more §4.4.11.

[17] See esp. §4.4.2.

evidence to associate it particularly with "Mainstream" contexts at its emergence.[18]

- The early Mahāyāna therefore most probably did *not* receive a supposed ready-made two-body model from Mainstream Buddhism.
- In fact, *the earliest* conceptions of *dharmakāya* we can find are in line with the classic Mahāyāna understanding. The supposed "Mainstream" *dharmakāya* may therefore just as well be *later* than the "Mainstream" understanding.

I believe that the scholars who have constructed or followed the standard narrative have fallen into error on these various points for a combination of four main reasons. These reasons are, in brief: (1) overly credulous acceptance of traditional apologetic readings of early (Nikāya/Āgama) material; (2) an unwarranted and simplistic faith in later doxography; (3) a monomaniacal focus on *trikāya* ("three body") doctrine as the teleological focus of this history; (4) a corresponding disregard for a number of other important notions of embodiment. The standard narrative incorporates within itself flawed assumptions in each of these respects. I will therefore briefly discuss each problem in turn, and the correctives I believe each requires.

The first underlying problem with the standard narrative is that modern scholars have been too willing to believe the later tradition when it points to certain early (Nikāya/Āgama) passages as scriptural warrants for later concepts. This problem seems particularly clear in the case of a supposed Pāli-canonical notion of the **dhammakāya*.[19] Later scholiasts pointed to a handful of key passages as the *loci classici* for the concept of *dhammakāya/dharmakāya* as it later became current, and contemporary Buddhologists seem to have been uniformly happy to

[18] See Ch. 4.5.

[19] See Ch. 3.2.

believe that their reading of those passages was accurate, and therefore not to have inquired too closely into the actual information each of these passages conveys taken in isolation from such apologetic agendas. The same problem seems almost certainly to underlie the confusion surrounding the concepts of *sa-* and *nirupadhiśeṣanirvāṇadhātu* ("the Nirvāṇa-element with/out remainder").[20] It may also be at work, to some extent, in errors of emphasis and interpretation in the study of the *manomayakāya*[21] and the body of marks.[22]

A second reason for errors in the standard narrative seems to be an excessive faith in later doxography, and a simplistic reading of its implications for earlier history. In actual fact, doxographies that ascribe key ideas to the "Schools" (of Sarvâstivāda and Mahāsāṃghika) are significantly later than the Mahāyāna ideas supposedly influenced by them, as are any texts that are extant from the schools themselves to attest to the relevant ideas. The standard narrative, however, seems to be built on an assumption that all significant *doctrines* later ascribed to schools are as old as the doxographic *labels* to which those doctrines attach.[23] This overly naive approach inevitably risks projecting back into earlier doctrinal history ideas and categories that only belong to later periods.

The third and most serious problem with this standard narrative is that it is centred upon a teleological understanding, which conceives of the entire problem of embodiment in Buddhism as the problem of *trikāya,* its origins, and its emergence. All writers, in varying degrees, interpret the question, "What interesting ideas about the body are propounded in Buddhism?"

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[20] See Ch. 3.4, and also §§4.4.5, 5.2.8.

[21] See Ch. 2.3.

[22] See Ch. 3.1.

[23] See Ch. 4.2, esp. §§4.2.3-4.2.6, and Ch. 4.4.

to mean, "What bodies are predicated of Buddhas, and why?" They then further interpret this question in turn to mean, "Where does the theory of three bodies come from?" They thus fail to see anything that they cannot perceive as directly related to this anachronistic and somewhat superficial question.[24]

The teleological fixation on *trikāya* exerts its deleterious influence in two directions. In one direction, i.e. backward in time, prior systems and doctrines are regarded as mere background to the articulation of this theory, and anything that is not so perceived is disregarded. In the other direction, forward in time, the subsequent history of embodiment doctrines is analysed simply in terms of the vicissitudes of *trikāya*, or worse, degeneration away from the pinnacle it represents.[25] The overall tendency in the scholarly literature, then, is to portray the Mahāyāna doctrinal history in question as if it was in the grip of an inexorable teleological force that first drove it to *trikāya* doctrine as a necessary consummation, and then crowned that doctrine in glory as the last word on the matter.[26]

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[24] Paul Harrison is thus right, I believe, to complain that various writers "have been unduly influenced by Trikāya formulations", "Real Phantom Body" 78, n. 20.

[25] This seems even to be the case even in Makransky's account of Haribhadra's "four-body" theory in *Buddhahood Embodied,* though Makransky's work is otherwise the most careful and generally excellent study of an aspect of the problem of embodiment in Buddhism in recent years (and perhaps ever).

[26] This teleological notion is often overt. To give a few examples among the more seminal items in the secondary literature:

Reuben Habito's Japanese article on the bodies of the Buddha, which in many respects is excellent, is nonetheless structured around the problem of accounting for the origins of *trikāya* doctrine, and seems largely to concur with earlier scholarship that "the theory of Buddha bodies attained full theoretical perfection with the *trikāya* doctrine" (三身説によって仏身論は理論としての充全的な完成にいたった), "Busshin ron no tenkai" 12. Note, however, Habito's thesis that the tradition, almost from its inception, was marked by *two competing systems* of *trikāya* theory, one "dharmo-centric" (stemming from MSA) and one "Buddho-centric" (stemming from RGV). Habito's is thus perhaps the single systematic account most prepared to recognise complications that countervail against the supposed *telos* of the Asaṇga *trikāya*. (Takeuchi's account also gives some consideration to RGV.)

Although Louis de la Vallée Poussin is more ready that most of the other scholars whose work is reviewed here to recognise complexities and nuances in the material, his "Appendice" is arguably the account in the secondary literature most essentialistically mesmerised by the triad: he first frames the study of even the Pāli sources in terms of a kind of informal doctrine of three bodies; "Appendice" 764-766. Similarly, and uniquely among secondary scholars, la Vallée Poussin characterises Sarvâstivāda

In concrete terms, this teleological focus leads to omissions of relevant ideas on three significant fronts: (1) omission of anything not called *kāya*; (2) omission of any embodiment not predicated primarily of the Buddha, or of the predication of bodies also predicated of the Buddha as they are predicated of other beings; (3) failure to consider those embodiments that *are* studied in their own terms, and not merely in that dimension of them that might anticipate *trikāya* ideas.

The first omission is arguably the most serious, since the number of relevant ideas it leads scholars to disregard is quite staggering. The initial assumption that the interesting problem is *tri<u>kāya</u>* doctrine, that is, the emergence of *svābhāvika-/dharma<u>kāya</u>, sāṃbhogika<u>kāya</u>,* and

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doctrine as also of "three bodies"; "Appendice" 767 ff. See §4.4.10 for a refutation of the key member of the supposed triad la Vallée Poussin believes he perceives here. Finally, he calls the doctrine found in the "school of Asaṇga" "complete and perfect" ("complet et parfait"); "Appendice" 797.

Nagao Gadjin's entire account of bodies in Buddhism is dominated by the conclusion that "it was in the philosophy of the Yogācāra school (or the Vijñāna-vāda school) represented by Asaṇga and Vasubandhu that the two-body theory developed until it was *consummated* into a three-body theory". Nagao, "On the Theory" 30, my emphasis. Similarly, he says, "the theoretic *perfection* of the doctrine of Buddha-body lies in the triangular concept of the three Buddha-bodies,"38; "the *trikāya* theory may be regarded as a *consummated* theory," 43; etc.

Akanuma Chizen, to a lesser extent, also assumes a related teleological view. "Triple Body", *infra.* The key distinguishing feature of Akanuma's teleology seems to be its bias towards *Lotus Sutra* pietism. His real *telos* is arguably the *ekayāna* ("the conception of Dharma, culminating in the theory of Ekayāna (or One Vehicle . . . " 9); to which the three-body theory is merely an adjunct (" . . . and of the Dharmakāya", 9). In Akanuma's account, too, however, "the theory of the Triple Body came to be formulated in Buddhism *as we have it now* due to the genius of Asaṇga," 22, my emphasis; "finally", in "Asaṇga's Trinity (*sic*!) . . . the third Body, the Vipākakāya (*sic*) or the Body of Recompense, came to find its legitimate place. The Trinity, thus *complete* as dogma, has now put the Vipākakāya Buddha in the place of the natural Buddha as the Buddhist object of faith, making its content ever deeper and more enhancing" etc., 28-29.

Paul Demiéville, too, orients his account around *trikāya*, though his wording is more measured, and of all scholars he presents perhaps the greatest quantity of material that complicates a simplistic teleological picture. Nonetheless, he still says, for example, "The vigorous genius of Asaṇga at last extricated and defined in immutable outline the three Bodies, which were to remain the classic triad" ("Le vigoureux génie d'Asaṇga dégage enfin et définit en traits immuables les trois Corps qui resteront la triade classique"), "Busshin" 175.

Finally, Guang Xing's recent *Concept of the Buddha,* which is also clearly organised around the teleological vision of *trikāya* as the crowning destiny of Buddha-body doctrine. My reservations about the quality of its arguments makes me hesitate to consider this work as an important contribution to the study of the Buddha's bodies. Nonetheless, the fact that it is one of only two book-length studies of the problem in English to date requires me to mention it. See further my review of Guang's book in NZJAS.

nairmāṇikakāya. As a result, the standard view takes the word *kāya* as its criterion for identifying interesting and relevant objects of study.

Against this, I will argue that the relevant criterion is actually *the body,* whatever it might be called.[27] This approach leads to the consideration of a number of important ideas, including:

- the relics of the Buddha;[28]
- conceptions of embodiment in the translation corpus of Lokakṣema, linked by the use of Chinese *shen* 身 for unknown Indic terms (if any);[29]
- the "body of birth" or "body born of mother and father"; these are known only in Chinese translations of uncertain Indic terms, and the body so named is the body actually opposed by Sarvâstivāda to the *dharmakāya* (instead of the *rūpakāya*);[30]
- the idea that the Buddha's body is like adamant or even, eventually, *of* adamant (*vajrakāya*);[31]
- the paired concepts of "Nirvāṇa with" and "without a remainder of support" (*sôpadhiśeṣa-/nirupadhiśeṣanirvāṇadhātu*), on a corporeal reinterpretation to which they were subjected in later sources;[32]

[27] I lay out the reasons for this contention more fully in §1.3 on methodological considerations below.

[28] See Ch. 4.1.

[29] See Ch. 4.2.

[30] See Ch. 4.4.

[31] See Ch. 5.1. It is an odd anomaly that even though this notion *is* eventually labelled by a term that includes *kāya,* the standard narrative seems to have considered it largely irrelevant. One can only suspect that this is, again, because "classic" formulations of *trikāya* do not yet make any reference to it. As we will see, however, the notion of *vajrakāya* itself was almost certainly current in some form in the same era when *trikāya* doctrine was elaborated.

- the Yogācāra doctrine of "revolutionary transformation of the support" (*āśrayaparāvṛtti*).[33]

The second omission apparently conditioned by the teleological focus on *trikāya* is the failure to consider embodiments of beings other than the Buddha, or to consider the attribution of embodiments sometimes attributed to the Buddha to other beings. Here, it seems that the standard account assumes that *trikāya* is the interesting problem; *trikāya* is a doctrine of *buddhakāya,* bodies *of the Buddha*; and it therefore is not necessary to look at any bodies not ascribed to the Buddha specifically. The most significant omission conditioned by this assumption is the failure to consider ideas about the ordinary given embodiments of unremarkable sentient beings.[34] It also, however, leads to a skewed consideration of bodies that are sometimes ascribed of the Buddha. The standard view consistently fails to note and examine the fact that some such bodies are also ascribed to other beings, most notably: the "body made of mind" (*manomayakāya*);[35] the body of marks of the great man (*mahāpuruṣa*);[36] and the *rūpakāya* (in some important sources).[37]

In the third kind of omission conditioned by teleological focus on *trikāya,* the standard account consider important earlier ideas of embodiment *only* in those limited respects in which they

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[32] See Ch. 3.4, §4.4.5 and §5.2.8.

[33] See Ch. 5.2.

[34] See Ch. 2.1 (and also Ch. 2.2).

[35] See §2.3.1, and esp. senses (1), (2), (5), (6), (7), (8) and (9) among the senses of *manomayakāya* discussed there.

[36] See Ch. 3.1. I am thinking, of course, of the well-known fact that the marks of the *mahāpurisa/mahāpuruṣa* are usually held to characterise the "wheel-turning king" (*cakkavattirāja*) as well as the Buddha.

[37] See esp. the discussion of *rūpakāya* in the Sarvâstivāda in §4.4.2.

appear as harbingers of elements of the *trikāya* model, and not in their own terms. In the case of *manomayakāya* and the body of marks, in particular, this leads to a very partial and inadequate analysis of the significance of those ideas in their own right.

When these various oversights are combined, then, teleological orientation around *trikāya* doctrine simply leads the standard account to omit half of the relevant ideas about embodiment in Buddhist doctrinal history. This arguably leads it even to misinterpret the significance of *trikāya* doctrine itself, by examining it in a curtailed and impoverished context that omits many of the relevant ideas against which it is articulated. The most fundamental point on which this dissertation differs from the standard account presented above is therefore that it rejects from the outset the teleological orientation of the standard account, and the corresponding artificial limitation of the question to a subset of the ideas actually relevant.

1.2 Major theses of this dissertation

In large part against these errors and biases in the standard view, this dissertation argues the following principal theses:

- Buddhist ideas about embodiment are merely one particular, local cultural or religious species of a more general class of ideas about embodiment. We can expect to find these ideas, under different guises, anywhere human philosophical, religious and cultural expression attempts to come to grips with the basic shape and problems of human existence. The common, underlying nature of this problematic is determined by certain fundamental facts of our nature as embodied, sentient and signifying beings.

- At the most general level at which they are nonetheless specifically Buddhist, Buddhist ideas about embodiment are generally to be understood in terms of an enduring dissatisfaction with ordinary, given embodiment. This is because ordinary given embodiment is limited or finite in several senses: it is temporally bounded (mortal); it is subject to physical and karmic conditions, which impose upon it the species of suffering; against these conditions, the person embodied in such embodiment has limited power to act freely and determine his or her own fate. From this founding dissatisfaction springs a whole field of discourse and imagery, populated by an immense variety of specific models, but basically oriented around two poles – one critical, one ideal. At the critical pole lies the express articulation of the inadequacy of given embodiment. At the ideal pole lie various visions of ideal embodiment, most typically of the Buddha as the archetypal perfected being. These visions of ideal embodiments, naturally, carry with them as their shadow or mirror image a range of critical understandings of the inadequacy of given embodiment, often by mere implication.

It is in this sense that this dissertation, as its title indicates, explores the problematic of the "somatics of liberation". In phrasing the title in this manner, I meant to allude to the following thesis:

- It is rarely or never an adequate conception of the religious goal of Buddhism to imagine its realisation as a purely gnostic, cognitive or "spiritual" matter. Rather, this religious goal must logically entail some somatic dimension, foregrounded or merely implicit, inasmuch as it always entails the radical

transcendence of all suffering and therefore all the species of finitude, conditionality and limitation that give rise to suffering.[38] The term "liberation" (*vimukti, mokṣa, vimocana, visaṃyoga* etc.) is thus a more flexible, neutral and appropriate term to use in this instance than terms like "enlightenment" or "awakening", which are biased towards the gnostic or cognitive. The "somatics of liberation" are the corporeal corollaries that for Buddhism have almost always attended the event of liberation The phrase refers most basically to liberation *from* the given, inadequate embodiments that are the object of critique, on the one hand, and liberation *to* some state of ideal embodiment (even if it be utter disembodiment), on the other.

The foregoing theses are so general as to apply to the problematic of embodiment throughout Buddhist doctrinal history; they characterise the problematic in its most general terms, as it persists through the various developments that ensued in the course of that history. The bulk of this dissertation, however, is occupied by the examination of specific developments comprising that history, leading to the following major theses.

- It is not the case that all parts of the field traversed by Buddhist ideas of embodiment are equally developed at all phases of Buddhist doctrinal history. Rather, we see a gradual exploration or discovery of the field as a whole, and its gradual population by a range of different ideas, over time.

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[38] This insight into the way corporeal concomitants inevitably attend full liberation in Buddhism obviously has difficult implications for the mind-body problem. Exploration of these implications, however, will have to await future work.

Buddhist ideas about embodiment begin, on the whole, in a mode that is overwhelmingly negative towards the category of embodiment as such, and correspondingly ineffabilist,[39] at best, with regard to ideal embodiments. Its negativity consists in the fact that the consistent emphasis in almost all explicit talk or imagery about the body holds embodiment *per se* to be a bad thing, and is in a critical mode. Even to the limited extent that room *may* be left for the possibility of a positive and adequate mode of embodiment, this recognition can be described as ineffabilist in that such an adequate mode of embodiment is not spoken of directly. At best, rather, it inhabits the purely negative space carved out by implication in the discourse critiquing ordinary given embodiment.

Over time, however, a gradual tendency emerges towards more positive attitudes towards possibilities of embodiments. This tendency proceeds in two broad phases. First, more effabilist[40] conceptions of adequate, ideal embodiment also emerge. Second, as a logical extension of this basic effabilism,

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[39] I use the term "ineffabilism" to label any position that rejects the possibility of speaking adequately of something. A position need not proclaim its ineffabilism overtly to count as ineffabilist. We can conceive of a strong ineffabilism in which the ineffabilist imperative also extends to a prohibition against declaring the ineffability of the ineffable. We would then descriptively be dealing with an ineffabilism by implication rather than declaration. There are obvious difficulties in distinguishing between such strong ineffabilism, or ineffabilism by implication, and systems in which the hypothetical ineffable is simply rejected out of hand.

[40] I use the term "effabilism" as a simple opposite to the term "ineffabilism" as defined above in n. 39. As is shown by the comparative rarity of even the basic adjective "effable", we usually seem to assume effability, and the "ineffable" is what linguists call the "marked term" of the opposition. In the case of the Buddhist history studied here, however, it is notable that ineffabilism seems to comprise the point of departure, if a point of departure that is probably founded upon an oppositional stance to more effabilist mainstream Indian discourses. As I will argue below, effabilism seems to wax over historical time within Buddhism, so that within the context of this history, effabilism is rather the marked term, and the advent of effability the event worthy of note.

embodiment is admitted and conceived in more and more kataphatic[41] modes. With the gradual emergence of these more positive ideas, the overall shape of the field of modes of embodiment and ideas about them becomes plain, from the critical-given to the ideal poles.[42]

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[41] The distinction between ineffabilism and effabilism is more basic and foundational than the opposition between apophasis and kataphasis. Both apophasis and kataphasis are alternative modes of discourse *within* the broader stance of effabilism; even apophatic discourse still admits the basic possibility of discourse *per se*. Apophasis and kataphasis are therefore like a second-order, more circumscribed spectrum of possibilities within effabilism as a whole. An overall spectrum from the most negative to the most positive attitudes towards the possibility of capturing a referent adequately in discourse extends beyond the alternatives of kataphasis and apophasis, into the more radical negativity of strict ineffabilism:

Negative			Positive
Ineffabilism		Effabilism	
	Apophasis		Kataphasis

[42] I must also explain what I mean by "effabilist (or ineffabilist) modes of embodiment", or "embodiment in a kataphatic (or apophatic) mode". I do *not* mean effabilist, ineffabilist, kataphatic or apophatic *language about* embodiment. I mean rather to contrast with one another modes of embodiment, taken as a domain in and of itself, which modes relate *to one another* as effabilist and ineffabilist or kataphatic and apophatic kinds of language relate to one another.

The underlying problem here is that body or embodiment is (claimed to be) a mode of knowledge or meaning that is not reducible to language ("discourse") or imagery. This is surely one of the main points of the Buddhist history we pursue here – that a body makes a difference, and that truth or knowledge embodied is *not* the same as that truth or knowledge accessed some other way. Because embodiment is thus supposed to have the status of a mode of knowledge or meaning in its own right, not reducible to other modes or media, it is a legitimate endeavour to attempt to describe the registers of that mode as we describe the registers of other signifying media like language.

In order to do this, we must improvise a terminology. One way to do this is, as here, to borrow the more developed terminology used to describe signification in natural language; similarly, we can figuratively apply the language of visual representation, another ready point of reference. The risk of such expedients, however, is that they will encourage us to forget the approximation entailed, confound the home domain of the borrowed terminology with the domain of body or embodiment itself, and mistakenly thinking that discourse or imagery is all there is to the claim.

I therefore use the terms "effabilist", "ineffabilist", "kataphatic" and "apophatic" with trepidation, but I also cannot think of any alternatives. I can only appeal to my readers to bear in mind that the proper domain of reference of these terms, where used of embodiment, is embodiment itself, even where I am forced to speak frequently of "the discourse of embodiment" and so forth for want of better terms.

It is certainly worth pausing to observe that the impasses that confront us in attempting to find an adequate terminology to discuss these distinctions are identical to difficulties with which the tradition itself was forced to grapple. Indeed, it seems highly likely that it was a painful awareness of the difficulties of articulating these problems in language that drove some divisions of the tradition into ineffabilist or apophatic stances.

- Key moments in the long, gradual passage from early negativity-ineffabilism to the effabilist and eventually kataphatic expression of ideals of perfect embodiment are, in rough chronological order:[43]

(1) Pāli-canonical period:

(i) The idea is present very early that advanced meditators can, and probably must, elaborate a more powerful and satisfactory "body made of mind" as a medium and stepping-stone to ultimate realisation.[44]

(ii) Early texts also develop the physiognomic idea that the Buddha-to-be, in his *bodhisattva* aeons, must have enjoyed an embodiment far better than average as reward for his immensely meritorious acts. This idea is expressed in the concept of the body bearing the marks of the "great man" (*mahāpuruṣa*), and probably takes on full force as part of the emergence of "*jātaka* thinking" and the earliest *bodhisattva* ideal.[45]

(iii) Probably from its outset, the cult of relics already implies the idea that a significant dimension of the Buddha – at least much of his power – continued to be embodied in these "bodies" (*śarīra*) even after the end of his last earthly lifetime.

[43] Although this chronology doubtless already appears rather full, it still does not include many of the elements of the overall history treated in this study. For an attempt at a more complete summary of that overall chronology, see Ch. 6.1.

[44] See Ch. 2.3.

[45] See Ch. 3.1.

(2) Approx. turn of Common Era:

In Kharoṣṭhī reliquary inscriptions around the turn of the Common Era, the idea is first dimly articulated that the person of the Buddha or the nature of his buddhahood is fully embodied in relics. From this point onwards, this idea merely gains strength in discourse about and practices surrounding relics.[46]

(3) Approx second century C.E.:

(i) As early in the post-Pāli-canonical textual record as we have evidence, i.e. in the earliest phases of the Chinese record, it is claimed that the Buddha or buddhahood is most veritably embodied in one or another of three main forms:

(a) in his gnosis (*bodhi, jñāna, sarvajñatā* etc.);[47]

(b) in the emergent Mahāyāna "absolute", that is, in the ultimate, immutable and common nature of all reality;[48]

(c) in the five "pure aggregates" (*anāsravaskandha*).[49]

The first two of these modes or loci of the Buddha's embodiment are not necessarily mutually exclusive, and indeed, even in these very early materials, there is evidence that they were already

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[46] See Ch. 4.1.

[47] See Ch. 4.3, esp. §§4.3.3-4.3.5; also Ch. 4.4, esp. §4.4.8-4.4.9.

[48] See esp. §4.2.8, §4.3.5, §4.3.7, §4.3.11.

[49] I.e. morality, concentration, insight, liberation, and special knowledge or gnosis (*jñāna*) of the vision of liberation. See esp. p. 529 ff., §4.3.6, §4.4.9.

identified, e.g. under the name of the "perfection of wisdom" (*prajñāpāramitā*).[50]

(4) Approx. third century C.E.:

(i) The term *dharmakāya* emerges as a label applied variously to some of the understandings of the Buddha's most veritable embodiments whose emergence in nascent form were mentioned above at (3)(i).[51] Prior to this period, we have no solid evidence that there was any clear discourse of *dharmakāya* so-named, though the *word* clearly existed in at least one (!) much earlier text.[52] In fact, we have no evidence of any discourse of kinds of *kāya* prior to this point, and this moment also marks the inception of *kāya* discourse *per se.* Full kataphasis has arrived in the conception of ideal bodies.[53]

- As this outline suggests, the emergence of effabilist and especially fully kataphatic visions of positive, radically adequate, ideal embodiment was almost entirely the result of various Mahāyāna innovations. This larger thesis emerges

[50] We will consider evidence that the third mode of embodiment listed here, at least, and perhaps also the first, is already attested in nascent form in the Kharoṣṭhī inscriptions already mentioned at (1) above. Also in this period, it is already said that the Buddha's body is (actually) "like adamant (*vajra)*", in one or another of several senses. This is another small indication of the growing tendency to effabilist and kataphatic understandings of embodiment. See §4.1.2.5. However, it was not until the fourth century that it was to take on the greater significance of the fully fledged *vajrakāya.* See Chapter 5.1.

[51] See Ch. 4.5.

[52] See §3.2.1.

[53] By this I mean both that there is a fundamental effabilism that holds it is possible to speak of ideal embodiment, and that positive qualities are further directly ascribed to it. See n. 41.

in part from two further supporting subordinate theses, both negative in character, about specific flaws in the standard received narrative outlined above:

- There is no true "dharma-body" (*dhammakāya*) of the Buddha in the Pāli canon.[54]
- It cannot be shown that any Sarvâstivāda notion of the Buddha's bodies predates our early Mahāyāna texts. It is a much more conservative and therefore plausible interpretation of our evidence to imagine rather that Sarvâstivāda Abhidharma notions of Buddha-bodies are in part an adoption of and in part an adaptive reaction to Mahāyāna developments.[55]

- Docetistic Buddhalogy is also most probably a squarely Mahāyāna innovation. In its earliest known form, in the *Lokânuvartanā-sūtra*,[56] this doctrine has clear and demonstrable links to the emergent idea of the Buddha's most veritable embodiment in the Mahāyāna "absolute", already mentioned as characteristic of the same period above in (3) (i) (b). Docetistic Buddhalogy is therefore a corollary and likely offshoot of the development of such effabilist and eventually kataphatic notions, though it is itself not directly an effabilist or

[54] See Ch. 3.2.

[55] See Ch. 4.4, esp. §§4.4.11-4.4.12.

[56] Already attested in a Chinese translation by Lokakṣema, and thus belonging to the same period as the roughly "second century" materials discussed directly above. See Ch. 4.2.

kataphatic notion of ideal embodiment. This thesis also has a further negative subordinate thesis and corollary:

  - Docetism cannot be shown to exist in any Mahāsāṃghika and/or Lokôttaravāda context earlier than it appears in connection with clearly Mahāyāna ideas. It is a more conservative and plausible interpretation of our evidence to imagine that when it does appear in such contexts, it is an adoption of Mahāyāna developments.

- Increased effabilism is a general hallmark of the Mahāyāna; even the Prajñāpāramitā is arguably more effabilist with regard to the "absolute" or the religious ideal than Pāli-canonical texts. The Mahāyāna turn to greater effabilism is more basic than, and prior to, the more frequently observed dynamics of subsequent relations between apophasis and kataphasis, which are both subspecies of the underlying effabilism.[57] This effabilism is of a piece with a corresponding Mahāyāna emphasis on immanence, which finds expression along many conceptual axes – buddhahood is in the world, identical with all the reality of the world, etc; buddhahood is in all sentient beings; *nirvāṇa* is *saṃsāra*; the best *nirvāṇa* is *apratiṣṭhitanirvāṇa*; etc. Effabilism is of a piece with immanence because effabilism is to language as immanence is to things; an immanent divine is more amenable to description in worldly terms.

Over time, as the Mahāyāna further follows through to its logical conclusion the founding positive impetus of the effabilist turn, it also becomes

[57] See above n. 41.

increasingly kataphatic. This further development can also be traced in conceptions of embodiment. The logic of relation to immanentalism is repeated here at one remove: as immanence is to things, and as effabilism is to language at large, so kataphasis is to the positive content and referents of language.

This being the case, effabilistically and kataphatically conceived ideal embodiments are also prey to what I call the "antinomy of immanence".[58] The very category of immanence is riven at its heart by an insoluble tension between the imperative to immanence, which obtains at least so long as the transcendent must be available to worldlings to enable their salvation, and the axiomatic danger that transcendence will be fatally compromised by entanglement with the world. In other words, what immanence giveth with one hand and taketh away with the other. The better a conception serves the imperative to immanence, the worse off transcendent emerges; while conversely, genuine transcendence systematically precludes satisfying immanence.

If buddhahood embodied is by definition buddhahood made tangible to sentient beings in the world (primarily to others, but perhaps even to the Buddha

[58] I have in mind here a primarily formalist definition of "immanence" that departs from a Durkheimian, content-neutral notion of "the sacred" as "that which is set apart". Where a system supposes any instance that is "transcendent", i.e. beyond the world or outside its fold (*lokôttara* etc.), "immanence" may be formally defined as the presence, indwelling, infusion or intrusion of that transcendent *within* the order of the world from which it was originally "set apart". Obviously, in specific systems, these categories will usually be held to be contentful in important ways, and specific local instances of purported immanence will therefore be inflected differently. My claim here, however, is that the very structure of the notion of "immanence", so formally defined, is prey to this antinomy prior to such considerations of specific content. See further Ch. 5.4, esp. 1308 ff., and also p. 1241.

himself), then effable ideal embodiment (not to say kataphatically conceived embodiment), being a structural analogy to immanence in the domain of language, is also inscribed by this very "antinomy of immanence". From the moment where the effabilist and eventually kataphatic pole of embodiment discourse became a going concern, then, this tension is a powerful and ever-present motor driving ongoing doctrinal creativity.

- This effabilist and eventually kataphatic pole of the overall field of embodiment having thus clearly emerged by the end of the third century, the field so constituted became thereafter the scene of various dialectical tugs-of-war to and fro, towards one pole or another. In this fray, positions staked out long before often remained alive, and were joined by new positions at various junctures. This process continues long after the elaboration of the supposed "classic" *trikāya* theory, and proper consideration of the vicissitudes of this dialectic must ultimately include not just models of multiple *kāya,* but also: ideas about the bodies called *śarīrāṇi* (relics); ideas implicit in practices; the very different, and various, conceptions of the relationship between buddhahood and bodies found in Tantric and Chan contexts; and so on.[59]

It has not been possible here to pursue this dialectic very far beyond the advent of overtly kataphatic models of embodiment in the third century. Nonetheless, the chronological purview of this dissertation does include several phenomena characteristic of the fourth century, which are the subjects of the following theses:

[59] See, respectively, Ch. 5.4, §4.1.1, and the brief comments in §6.2.13.

- *Āśrayaparāvṛtti* ("the revolutionary transformation of the basis") is best interpreted in terms of a primary reference to the problematic of embodiment.[60] Most if not all of the varieties of specific contents given to this concept, and to the concept of "basis" (*āśraya*) as it enters into it, can be interpreted as so many positions with regard to the basic underlying problematic of embodiment, and in particular, with regard to the basic question, "What kind of transmutation allows the transition from ordinary, given embodiment to the ideal, perfectly adequate embodiment of the Buddha/buddhahood?"

- It is most likely that the corporeal reinterpretation of the conceptual opposition between *sôpadhiśeṣanirvāṇadhātu* and *nirupadhiśeṣanirvāṇadhātu* ("the realm/element of Nirvāṇa with/out a remainder of support") emerges in this same period as a widespread and significant concept, even if it might have had a marginal existence in some prototypical form earlier on.[61] Like *āśrayaparāvṛtti*, the system comprised by these concepts on the corporeal reinterpretation can also be regarded as an attempt to think coherently about the relation between given and ideal embodiments.

- The timing of these related developments of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* and *sôpadhiśeṣa-/nirupadhiśeṣanirvāṇadhātu* is unlikely to be coincidental, but rather can be interpreted as an attempt to think through the implications of that new

[60] See Ch. 5.2.

[61] See Ch. 3.4, §4.4.5, and §5.2.8.

discourse, following as they do so closely on the heels of the emergence of effabilist and overt kataphatic discourse about ideal embodiments.

- The fourth century is also witness to the emergence of another very significant kataphatic development, one even more overtly kataphatic than the more neutrally effabilist notion of *dharmakāya* so-named in and of itself: the claim or understanding that the Buddha is most veritably embodied in an immortal body of adamant (*vajrakāya*).[62] This development does not emerge from thin air, but rather, can be traced back in part through a series of gradual developments in earlier, predominantly Mahāyāna texts, and in part to a very much older Buddhist discourse that describes the religious ideal as the "undying".

All the theses summarised above comprise the fuller background against which this dissertation argues we must interpret the emergence of the *trikāya* ("three bodies") model, and its significance. This leads to the following theses on the specific question of *trikāya* itself:

- In the early texts, *trikāya* doctrine is clearly intended to be understood in the context of the concept of *āśrayaparāvṛtti,* and can best be interpreted as an extension of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* theory to answer the interrelated questions: "What happens to embodiment next, *after* the first moment of its radical transformation into a perfectly adequate ideal?" and "What is special about the embodiment of the Buddha, as it results from *āśrayaparāvṛtti,* as opposed to the also perfect embodiments of other liberated beings?" In exploring the logic of

[62] See Ch. 5.1.

trikāya as an exploration of the further implications and aftermath of *āśrayaparāvṛtti,* we can go beyond the superficial observation *that* this doctrine is presented as an attempt to systematise several different conceptions of the Buddha's bodies, and begin to understand *how* that systematisation was proposed, and how it was supposed to work.

- *Trikāya* does indeed represent a significant development in the history of Buddhist ideas about the embodiments of the Buddha. But it does not resolve all the significant problems in the problematic of embodiment. In fact, the doctrine is, from its very outset in the earliest texts to feature it, riven by the "antinomy of immanence" described above. This antinomy finds several forms of expression, but in the early texts in particular, it is reflected in significant wrangling and confusion over where the boundary falls between which embodiment(s) are "for the sake of the Buddha himself", and which "for the sake of others".

- The stamp of the antinomy of immanence is also seen in the historical fact that *trikāya* is no more than a significant but passing moment in the development of ideas about bodies in Buddhism, though it does constitute an authoritative reference point and model for subsequent creative doctrinal endeavours. Beginning almost as soon as *trikāya* is elaborated, we see numerous attempts to elaborate it further, and numerous instances where one or another of its member bodies splits into further distinct multiple bodies. The majority of these further developments reveal the ongoing force of the trouble surrounding the categories of "for the sake of the Buddha himself" and "for the

sake of others", and behind it the "antinomy of immanence". Another significant outcropping of the same tension, however, can arguably be perceived in another significant minority strand of speculative activity that sometimes splits the *dharmakāya* between a "body of teaching" (*deśanādharma*) and an "embodiment in the absolute" (*dharmatā*).

These theses about the *trikāya* model in particular also have a negative corollary:

- *Trikāya* is neither the sole natural endpoint of ideas about embodiment preceding it in Buddhist history, nor the endpoint of interesting development in such ideas.

1.3 Methodology and method

By "methodology" here I mean just the second-order reflections, assumptions, posits and principles that determine actual working method. By "method" I mean the specific strategies and techniques adopted in the working process, as guided by this methodological framework and background. On these rough definitions, therefore, the following comments will outline several principles constituting the methodological grounds of this study, and then, for each, lay out a point of working method that derives from that principle. I begin with some very general philosophical posits that orient the study as a whole, and then proceed to several more pragmatic points. (Readers who are disinterested in or allergic to general philosophy might prefer to skip directly to §1.3.4 or perhaps §1.3.5.)

1.3.1 Grounding the study of ideas in reference to a robust ontology of several orders of real[63]

At the most general level, this study is directed by and oriented towards a set of very general philosophical questions and convictions. This is not the place to argue for those questions and convictions in anything like the detail that would be required to establish their worth against

[63] I have arrived at many of the ideas laid out in §§1.3.1-1.3.3 in the process of many long conversations with Roland Lamb, and it is often difficult to be sure in retrospect where my own ideas end and his begin. I here acknowledge my general indebtedness to Roland in my thinking on these questions.

The identification of good theoretical and practical models for the approach laid out here, if they exist, remains an urgent task for my future research. Thus far, despite attempts to find such predecessors, I unfortunately know of no theorists who have laid out the principles I here argue we should adhere to in the pursuit of comparative philosophy. I also regret to say I am aware of very few concrete comparative studies that seem to proceed upon the basis of such principles. One instance that might answer best to the principles I urge here is the work of my teacher, Michael Puett, as exemplified in his books *The Ambivalence of Creation* and *To Become a God.* In these works, Prof. Puett proceeds on the understanding that comparison must depart from the identification of commonalities between traditions before it can proceed to the accurate identification of differences, and that the most important commonalities are problematics (and debates surrounding them) rather than supposed solutions and individual positions. See further n. 72.

By contrast, I am only too aware of many models of the kind of comparative analysis I reject. The method I urge here seeks to identify commonalities shared by the objects of comparison, and to select objects of comparison at a level precisely such that they will afford robust commonalities. I hold that it is only possible to proceed to the accurate identification of differences on the basis of such considerations. By contrast, the common feature of studies I find dissatisfactory is that they give too little serious thought to commonalities, but rather proceed immediately to exaggerated, artificially simplistic, polarising claims about radical difference. Examples of this problem, in various senses, are legion. To give only a few: Bloom, *The Linguistic Shaping of Thought;* Chen, *Buddhism in China* and *The Chinese Transformation of Buddhism*; Granet, *La pensée chinoise;* Graham, "'Being' in Classical Chinese"; Hall and Ames, *Thinking from the Han* and *Thinking through Confucius*; Hansen, *A Taoist Theory of Chinese Thought;* Hu Shih, "The Indianization of China"; many of the essays in Kasulis, Ames and Dissanayake, *Self as Body in Asian Theory and Practice*, esp. contributions by Ames, Koller, Kasulis and Yuasa; those parts of Lusthaus, *Buddhist Phenomenology,* dealing with the problem of "Sinification"; Sharf, *Coming to Terms with Chinese Buddhism*; Yuasa, *The Body.*

A troubling measure of the epidemic currency of such ideas may also be found in the regularity with which prominent Western luminaries also fall immediately into polarised essentialisms when they turn their attention to aspects of Asian civilization. Examples of this embarrassing phenomenon include Barthes, *Empire of Signs;* Derrida's arguably parochial assertions about "Western" logocentrism in *Of Grammatology,* on which see Chang, "Hallucinating the Other"; Kristeva, *About Chinese Women;* and Lacan's remarkable assertion that the Japanese have no unconscious, for which see Shingū, "Freud, Lacan and Japan". This phenomenon is of course not new. With regard to the Chinese language especially, for example, see Zhang Longxi's *The Tao and the Logos* on a longer sweep of Orientalist ideas from Hegel to Fenellosa.

A disproportionate influence is also exerted by general theoretical ideas that emphasise an exaggerated relativism. Works in this vein offer, or are taken to provide, a theoretical flank to complement specific studies like those listed above. Prominent and influential examples include Donaldson, "On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme"; the work of Lakoff and Johnson on supposed epistemologically foundational metaphors, as in *Metaphors We Live By*; the strong ontological relativism of Quine, as e.g. in his "Ontological Relativity" (though I do not believe it is Quine's aim here to argue actual cultural relativism); or the "Sapir-Whorf" hypothesis, as exemplified in the essays collected in Whorf's *Language, Thought and Reality,* esp. "An American Indian Model of the Universe", "Language, Mind and Reality", "Some Verbal Categories of Hopi" etc.

competitor positions, or even to characterise them clearly and accurately. However, it seems best to offer at least a few brief remarks, both in the interests of open disclosure of my point of departure, and also by way of preparing the ground for future work to which I hope the present study will ultimately serve as prolegomenon. These remarks will here be presented more or less as point-blank statements, stripped of most supporting argument, and so for the purposes of the present dissertation, they may seem to comprise background posits.[64]

At the largest order of generality, which I understand to be the referent of the term "metaphysics", I am persuaded that the best characterisation of the fundamental conditions of all things is a kind of non-dualism.[65] By this I mean that I find it difficult to think about the ultimate coherence of the manifold of "existence", and at the same time to do non-reductionist justice to its complexity, without assuming that the entire order of the world, ourselves included, is run through by a non-dualist relation of interrelation-yet-difference (neither identity nor difference) between the aspects of key dualisms like extension/intension, existence/insistence, being/doing, thing/process, and so on.

At the same time, I also recognise that it is equally difficult to think about things *with* recourse to this kind of non-dualism, which I hold ultimately escapes our linguistic and conceptual categories precisely in virtue of the position of our language and minds as partial, specific, local and limited phenomena within this overall manifold. That is to say, it seems likely to me that in virtue of the relation between the equipment of thought and the whole of reality, important

[64] As a matter of principle, I stress that the views set forth here are not "assumptions". By this, I mean that they are not adopted merely as an otherwise indifferent matter of methodological convenience. Rather, I think it is possible to advance serious and substantial arguments for these views. I also mean that I have arrived at them not by a process of assumption, but by a long process of dialectical thinking between specific concrete exercises in comparative philosophy and intellectual history, and reflection at a general philosophical level.

[65] I derive this conviction in significant part from what I know of Buddhist philosophy itself.

levels of truth about the whole are in significant part ineffable and unthinkable, and inevitably escape our finite categories.

However, it will not be necessary to enter further into things at this level of generality – not even insofar as might make these confessedly cryptic statements clearer. This is because the simple reason that the propositions of this metaphysics are usually only indirectly relevant to projects in intellectual history such as this one. For the most part, I hold, it is possible to engage in this kind of project without reference to this most general level.

Indeed, the only reason I mention my views at this level at all is that it seems to me that a large confusion still lingers in much work in the humanities in general, and in certain branches of the social sciences, whereby precisely this level of metaphysical generality is misapplied as a so-called "theoretical" or "methodological" framework to the specific tasks of our various disciplines. On the ground, this means that something very akin to the position I have just described is regularly invoked as a "theoretical" or philosophical trump-card. Usually the relevant ideas are derived at some remove from post-modernism, post-structuralism or continental philosophy (with the twist that in Buddhist Studies scholars regularly appeal to the notion of emptiness to boot). That is to say, similar metaphysical assumptions – that reality is in flux, that it is infinitely rich and complex, that it inevitably escapes our categories, etc. – are supposed by themselves to directly enable the often facile critique of the ways we deploy more local categories in the study of the objects of our disciplines. We are told to avoid "reifying", "hypostasising" and "essentialising", etc. good advice in principle), but often in general terms, without any clear critique of the reasons this particular category is better or worse than that, or any clear proposal of positive alternative categories that would do the job better.

Against this sort of "theorising", in what follows I depart entirely from this broadest level of philosophical or "theoretical" generalisation, and offer a set of posits that between them assume a much more robust, non-mystical ontology of several categories of genuine existents, far closer to the picture suggested by "common sense". I suggest that to this robustly particular, severalist reality – a "bumpy" reality as opposed to the utter fluidity to which the interrogation of our categories seems to often to leap – corresponds the genuine possibility that some repertoires of categories will serve us better, in referentially matching this reality more accurately, than others. I suggest, further, that almost all the interest of a discipline like intellectual history lies in the attempt to find the best such set of categories, to critique categories that do the job more poorly in terms of their specific faults, and so forth.

It is for this reason that I said, immediately above, that metaphysics of the most general order is only indirectly relevant to the present project. Categories and the specific reals to which they refer may come and go, but it is in the very nature of metaphysics, as I defined it above, that it remains enduringly the same through all of them. It is therefore largely tangential to the project of finding the best set of categories if we only unremittingly observe that ultimately none is truly adequate.

On the other hand, I am also aware that some might assume a fundamental incompatibility between the robust ontology of several kinds of reals I will posit below and such a metaphysic. In proposing this severalist ontology, therefore, I may appear to expose myself to facile critique from the perspective of the cousin of that metaphysic, the so-called "theory" that adopts a rhetoric of opposing categories *per se*. To forestall such criticism, it is important to note that I hold that there is no contradiction between the kind of non-dualist metaphysic briefly avowed above and the severalist ontology to follow.

With this preliminary matter out of the way, I turn to the primary positive posits at the largest order of generality that I do consider directly relevant to this project. These posits bear on the level I understand to be meant by "specific ontology", that is, on the order of philosophy that discusses the kinds of things that exist and populate the overall manifold of existents. At this level, my primary posits are two:

(1) The study of ideas must be grounded in reference to a nonconceptual reality.

(2) In order to be of use to the study of ideas, we must assume a robust ontology in which the referents of this reference comprise several distinct orders of real.

Remarkable insights have obviously been achieved in the twentieth century on the basis of Ferdinand de Saussure's founding methodological move of bracketing out reference from the study of systems of meaning, and the redirection of attention to their internal structures, i.e. the interrelationships of their terms among themselves. At the same time, however, remarkable confusion has ensued, as thinkers have confused this move, which is at best a methodological device, with a discovery about the nature of ideas and meaning themselves. Reference is held not only to be an irrelevant distraction to the study of certain questions, but simply and fundamentally not to exist.[66] Saussure's move, however, did *not* banish the problem of reference, and indeed could not. In a picture larger than the limited concerns of linguistics as he defined it, the *conceit* of reference would still require account even if reference itself could be shown to be a mere and complete error. Further, it is still pragmatically the case that we

[66] The confusion of the vicissitudes of the notion of reference with the existential status of its own referent reality here is an obvious irony, which might be funny if it did not lead to so much serious incapacitation of the study of ideas.

live life and use language "as if" it is referential, and indeed, I suspect, will never be able (or motivated) to do otherwise.

Most importantly for our purposes here, it is not possible to study ideas without appealing to reference. The only way we can know what an idea claims, that is, what it means, and the only way we can therefore understand it, is to think that it has "aboutness" – that it is an idea *about* this or that aspect of the world as we inhabit it, or a world at the very least (if culturally or historically remote) significantly like our own.[67] This means, however, that we cannot afford to simply let our understanding of the nature of the referents of reference rest on unexamined assumptions – far less sweep the problem out of the way by overt disavowal. Rather, if our interpretations of those ideas are to withstand use and scrutiny, we must confront it head-on, and do our best to develop a clear and plausible picture of the reality to which our ideas refer.

For present purposes, I will thus assume that ideas derive the bulk of their meaning, especially that part which is significant for philosophy and intellectual history, from reference to things (at least a putative reference). I will not broach the very difficult question of how (or if) such reference from ideas to nonconceptual things is fundamentally possible. This leads us to another difficult question, namely, the question of how we are to understand the reality to which ideas refer to be structured, if we are to understand their very meaning of ideas by the light of that reference.

Obviously, the ultimate answer to this question may elude us forever, and we may at best only approach it asymptotically. What we require, therefore, is a provisional position, which will

[67] This is demonstrably the case even with positions that claim to circumvent reference, which nonetheless appeal to it all the time in order for their very claims to make sense; and it is even true for attempts to overtly refute the notion of reference *per se*, which have reference to reference itself, as a referent, in order to be able to refute it.

serve us in the interim as a necessary basis for ongoing enquiry. In such circumstances, it is both permissible and inevitable that we index our posits to the pragmatic ends of our enquiry. This then enables us to begin engaging in an ongoing bootstrap process, whereby we test those posits in their application to the ends for which they are elaborated, and use occasions where they fall down as prompts to revaluate the posits and refine them. The ultimate end of such a cyclical process, I will argue below, is that we can hope to gradually approach a more adequate characterisation of reality than we began with. For the present, however, we need first to address the more immediate question of where to begin.

First, let us observe that for most purposes, there are two extremes to which we might run in principle, each of which is equally useless. We have already visited the first extreme above, in briefly critiquing the misapplication of very general metaphysical posits ("theory") to the analysis of concrete objects of study by specific categories in the humanities. At this extreme, reality is understood to comprise only one relevant kind of existent – all of it – and statements inadequate to this single extraordinarily general category are regarded as inadequate or benighted. At the other extreme, we are also too often confronted with an excessively particularist proliferation of categories, whereby everything is supposed to be almost *sui generis,* and the subsumption of these particulars to more general categories a fundamentally misguided project.

What is required in the first instance, therefore, is an ontology populated by a typology of reals fine enough that it is adequate to the actual complexity of the world and its contents, but rough enough that it can embrace and correlate the very different ways of describing and coming to grips with that world and those contents found in various systems of thought and ideas. It is this level of ontological plurality that I here refer to as a "robust ontology of several orders of

real", where I intend the word "several" (partly tongue-in-cheek) to refer to more things than are embraced by monisms or dualisms, but less things that are sometimes imagined under the name of "pluralism". It is also this same kind of ontology that I referred to above as "bumpy" rather than utterly fluid.

Now, the complexity of different cultures and systems of ideas is indeed a significant part of the overall complexity of the world and its contents, and we will ultimately wish to account for this too. However, if, from the outset, we regard the differences between different ideas as equally important to differences between existents in the non-conceptual referential world, our analysis will never get off the ground to rise to the required levels of generality.[68] Rather, as we often see is the case in practice, it will remain hopelessly mired in the infinite particularities of the varieties of human thought. Thus, it is important at the outset to bracket out the variety of ideas, in order to approach to a first degree of approximation the actual variety of the rest of the world and its contents. This non-conceptual world already presents us with a rich array of objects of reference, to which the majority of ideas at least pretend or attempt to refer.

This means, then, that what is required for the effective interpretation of ideas, which constitute the object of intellectual history, is an assumption of reference to a primarily non-conceptual world and its contents, which must be characterised in terms of a robust ontology of several kinds or orders of real. As I will argue below, the population of this ontological typology is ultimately the eventual task of philosophy, and of the bootstrapping process comprising the study of ideas historically and comparatively as a serious branch of philosophy. Without pretending to be exhaustive or definitive, therefore, I believe that a list such as the

[68] To forestall possible objections, I emphasise that I do not mean to imply that ideas themselves cannot be the referents of other ideas. Obviously, they can. I merely mean that we can go a long way for comparative purposes if we begin by bracketing out ideas and considering *other* referents first. On the other hand, including ideas among the referents we examine first is likely to lead us into trouble.

following gives a representative idea of some of the more important dimensions of our lived reality, with reference to which philosophical and religious ideas must be interpreted:

(1) We are physical beings in a physical world, bound by the laws of physics. This fact includes, as key and conceptually difficult conditions governing human experience, the challenging facts of location in space, subjection to time, and subjection to causality.

(2) We are biological beings in organic bodies. These bodies, in part in virtue of their status as subspecies of the larger class of physical bodies, are inescapably finite in various regards. They are mortal. They have limited physical faculties and powers. They are dependent upon a rich range of specific conditions for their continued function moment to moment and day to day.

(3) In large part in virtue of our biological nature, but also significantly in virtue of our signifying capacities (see (4) below), we are social beings. This sociality operates, probably in all human groups in existence today, on at least two levels. (i) We are members of families and broader kinship groups, beginning at closest range from the humdrum but mind-bending fact that each of us originally emerged from the complex interaction of the bodies of other human beings, and extending off into the remembered and imagined reaches of ancestry, third-cousinry, and descent. (ii) We are also members of the complex structures of human interdependence that comprise society independent of blood ties.

This entire domain in its turn enfolds worlds of further complexity.

(4) We are signifying beings. This dimension of our being includes at least two main dimensions, which we can call intersubjective and intrasubjective. (i) First, all human beings use language, which has many universal features prior to the rich varieties of this or that specific language. We can include broadly under this head, as semiotics attempts to,[69] non-verbal symbolic systems that are also used for intersubjective communication – systems of signs from images to social etiquette, etc. (ii) Second, all human beings also think, is to say, represent their world to themselves and manipulate those representations intrasubjectively.

It is clear that these two domains of signification overlap in some degree, perhaps quite largely. At the same time, it also seems experientially clear that thought differs to some extent in both medium and capacity from intersubjective signification.

(5) We are aware beings, aware of our awareness and apparently, if this is a distinct phenomenon from the reflexive self-awareness of awareness, aware of ourselves. This dimension of our being may or may not actually emerge from or be a mere part of our status as signifying beings, as is sometimes claimed. For our present purposes, what matters is that it is experientially given as an apparent independent referent.

As I said immediately above, this list may not may ultimately be found inadequate, and I will argue below that the task of fleshing it out and rendering it more adequate is the proper goal of

[69] I am thinking here of the approach notably pioneered by Roland Barthe, and later systematised in Umberto Eco's *Theory of Semiotics.*

the historical and comparative study of ideas and of philosophy itself. Even such a first approximation, however, should show what I mean by a "robust ontology of several orders of real".

In particular, it seems to me that we it would be possible to show that many significant philosophical and religious problems ("significant", by definition almost, in being demonstrably shared by multiple or most philosophies and religions) emerge from the categories of this list, taken either individually or in combination. In particular, it seems, the peculiar patterns of interaction between (4) and/or (5) and all the members of the list, including themselves, are generative of a huge range of philosophical and religious problematics. Because they are generated by basic conditions of our being and existential situation, these problematics recur regularly or even universally in various cultural and historical contexts, though the guise in which they appear may differ, being shaped in part by local, particular modes of expression or concerns. This is not a claim into which I can enter in detail here. In order not to beat about the bush, the only example I will give is the example that concerns us here: the way human embodiment, as a philosophical and religious problematic, can best be understood in reference to specific components of this robust, severalist ontology.

As human beings, we are embodied in biological organisms (2 above), in which situation we are both subject to physical laws (1), and also inevitably bound up in social systems and the bearers of social roles (3). We might think of these respectively as our body itself, and some of its most important conditions and contexts. As is already implied by the very notion of "*em*bodiment", however, these external dimensions of us, do not exhaust our being. Something more of us is embodied *in* that body. There is, further, a fundamental tension between the dimensions of our

embodiment just listed and our status as signifying (4) and aware (5) beings, which seem intuitively to fall more on the side of "what is embodied". Without wanting to be exhaustive, one example of such tensions is the way our capacity for signification derives much of its use to us from its power of rapid and effortless generalisation, but this power means that our ideas are not bound by the same kinds of finitude as our physical, biological and social being. In short, we can imagine more than we are, and we can even imagine being infinite (or, in a significant sense, we *are* in fact infinite in this imaginative dimension of our being) where our physical being is in fact not.[70]

We could easily extend this analysis of basic features of the problematic of embodiment further, to explore the self-preservative mechanisms of biological and even physical beings, including humans, and the reasons we might therefore extend the neutral imagination of a *possibility* of more than we physically are, to a pressing and even desperate imperative to realise that possibility. However, this much should be enough to show, at least in principle, how the actual complex conditions of our existence in the world generate profound shared philosophical and religious problematics such as the problematic of embodiment. *Reference* to those conditions is therefore indispensable if we are to arrive an interpretation of any given response to such a problematic that appreciates is genuine meaning and thrust.

These remarks, I hope, make it clear that I consider reference to the real contents and conditions of existence, as characterised by a robust working ontology of several orders of real,

[70] In part, I have in mind here Roberto Mangabeira Unger's frequently reiterated programmatic statement that we are infinite in comparison to our contexts, whereas they, in comparison to us, are not. For example: "There is always more in us than in any . . . context or in any retrospective or prospective list of contexts. In comparison to them, we are infinite; pushing up against their limits, we discover there to be more within us;" *The Self Awakened,* 209; see also, e.g. *What Should the Left Propose?* 168-169, etc. However, I am also aware that the particular interpretation I give to this idea would probably not be accepted by Unger himself.

indispensable to the interpretation of ideas and their significance. It still remains to explain the special role of comparison in the process of working towards good interpretations of individual groups of ideas, and also the greater clarification of this underlying referential picture.

1.3.2 Comparison as the indispensable working method of intellectual history, and reference as the ground of comparison

Comparison of some kind is indispensable in all study of systems of ideas. The archetypal case of comparison in our common imagination is probably still the comparison of ideas from different cultural contexts or traditions, and the problems entailed in such cross-cultural comparison have been discussed a great, not to say inordinate, length. However, reflection quickly shows that ultimately, comparison is also at work in the study of the ideas of different historical eras within the same tradition; of different thinkers from the same tradition, even contemporaries; and even in the study of any single set of ideas at all, insofar as we have to implicitly compare it to the ideas we ourselves bring to that study as its initial starting point.

This being the case, it should be apparent that reference, already described above as the necessary condition of making sense of any individual idea on its own, is also the indispensable middle term of comparison. Indeed, this may be so obvious as to seem truistic, and to require no independent comment – if we need reference to understand one idea, we will surely need it to understand two. It is nonetheless worth separately pointing out the necessity of reference to comparison, because in almost all kinds of comparison except implicit comparison with our own ideas, we can easily slip into thinking of our comparison as a direct comparison of the two ideas or sets of ideas in and of themselves. As a result, it is, if anything, even easier to lose sight of this necessary referential dimension than it is in the case of ideas taken independently.

This being the case, however, it is preferably to make explicit this dimension of reference, as the third term of the comparison, and to be careful to consider it independently of the contents of the systems of ideas under comparison taken on their own terms. Where we do not take this necessary precautionary measure, we risk the terms of one or the other of the systems under comparison (usually the one closest to us) being mistaken for the simple facts of the referent. That is, we risk uncritically understanding the referent in the preferential terms of one system over another.

This risk is all the more pronounced in cases like the topic of the present study, where there is no overt comparative agenda, and it would be easy to fall into the illusion that we were simply studying one set of materials on its own terms. We must be mindful of the fact that the ideas studied here are from a cultural context remote from our own.[71] Where the fact of this comparison is not made explicit, the danger is redoubled that the analysis will confuse the particular take on the problem embedded in a system of ideas close to home with the facts of the case, and interpret the more remote Buddhist ideas against the implicit yardstick of those assumptions.

If comparison is the necessary working method of intellectual history, and reference the necessary third term of comparison, we will be better served by making both facts explicit, and coming directly to terms with the comparative and referential dimensions of any intellectual-historical project. These reasons would already be enough to frame the present project in

[71] This would remain true even if these ideas were to be studied by a scholar who, unlike me, self-identified as Buddhist, and was native to a culture in which Buddhism had been present for millennia. There would still be the cultural strangeness of the past to account for, and there will therefore always be a need for implicit comparison between these historically remote Buddhist ideas and ideas closer to home.

terms of reference to a real-world problem of embodiment, and a background comparison with takes on that problem in non-Buddhist contexts. However, I also perceive a final reason to push these necessities further and see them as virtues.

1.3.3 Less parochial philosophy as the goal of comparative intellectual history

The preceding considerations mean that all intellectual history is comparative intellectual history, and all comparative intellectual history is a branch of philosophy itself, and directly engaged on a less-recognised flank with the study of the world to which historical ideas refer. But if all reduces to plain philosophy, then why engage in the study of old ideas, or ideas from other cultures, at all? Why not just get on with pure philosophy and leave old or "Other" ideas for the curio-hunting of intellectual tourists?

In the process of deliberately considering first the comparative and referential import of historical religious and philosophical ideas, we can close a virtuous circle, in that we can feed back the results of our work into the severalist ontological typology that informs the analysis of reference in the first place. I see in this bootstrapping process our main hope for a corrective to the particularist happenstance of one or another cultural-intellectual history, and the best possibility of a path that will eventually lead us to a less parochial version of philosophy itself. Without reference to the full range of ideas available to us historically and cross-culturally, there is conversely a frequently realised danger that we will enclose ourselves in an artificially narrow cultural horizon, and mistake features of our own local situation for eternal verities.

As I said above, a bumpy reality, best described by the robust severalist ontology, generates common philosophical and religious problematics, and we can expect to see these problematics

consistently vexing multiple systems in widely differing contexts.[72] There is a world of difference, however, between the claim that *problematics* will recur, and the mistaken notion that the range of *solutions proposed* to those problematics will therefore be finite, so that the solutions of various traditions will merely comprise disguised variants of the same stable of positions. Once again, I do not have space here to argue this point, but I believe it is not in the nature of the case for things to turn out this way. Rather, the variability of human situations and creativity will ensure that new positions are always possible, even with regard to an old and perhaps perennial problem. Thus, a first part of the answer to the question why we should bother studying a wide historical and cultural range of ideas is that we will find new things.

However, as we explore the range of philosophical and religious ideas, our primary prospect of discovery is *not* that somewhere in the lumber-room of human ideas we will find "the" solution to this or that problem. We may not even necessarily find a better or a worse solution (though this certainly likely in many cases). Philosophical enquiry is such an endeavour that solutions may be mere rainbows, but considerable ground may be gained by a clearer understanding of the *problem.* Comparative study promises to greatly help us thus clarify the nature of the problems themselves.

[72] For the idea that comparison must be grounded in the study of common problematics or debates, I am indebted to the work of my teacher Michael Puett. For example: "The comparative approach that I advocate, therefore, is one in which the analyst attempts first to locate similar tensions and concerns in the cultures in question and then to trace the varying responses to those tensions and concerns. Such an approach has two advantages. First, it allows for an avoidance of the tendency in comparative frameworks to deny the individual and to deny differences that exist within cultures. If the focus is on discovering common tensions, rather than contrasting different assumptions, then once one has isolated the political and cultural tensions at hand, studying the ways in which particular individuals in particular contexts tried to deal with the perceived problems is possible. The comparison then involves the study of attempts by individuals in other cultures to confront similar political and cultural concerns. Second, by making explicit the tensions with which figures were grappling, analysing particular statements as reflective of an attempt at solving a given problem, and not as necessarily indicative of assumptions of the larger culture as a whole, becomes possible. It thereby helps the analyst to avoid the tendency, for example, to read a given statement concerning the correlation of humans and spirits made in a single text as necessarily reflective of the beliefs of the time;" "Humans and Gods", 71.

I have claimed here that aspects of the actual complex structure of our ontological situation are the ultimate determinants for many of the problems that engage philosophy and religion. I built on this understanding to claim that ideas cannot be understood properly except by reference to some understanding of that structure, implicit or explicit, and further, that the necessarily comparative study of the history of ideas must also proceed by reference to it. Now, however, I wish to reverse the apparent order of priority. Ultimately, we do not attempt to frame an understanding of ontology in order to pursue hermeneutics or the history of ideas. Rather, we properly pursue the interpretation and history of ideas in order to build an adequate ontology, that is, understand the real structure of ourselves and world in their most philosophically, religiously and therefore existentially troubling features. In this light, the overall structure of our complex ontological situation, and the struggle to understand it adequately, is the metaproblem – the real "Matrix", we might say, or the "mother of all" philosophical and religious problems. To begin to understand *this* problem adequately, in all likelihood, *is* to approach the best approximation we can have to a solution.

However, if there are genuine differences between the different positions taken by different thinkers, systems, religions and cultures to the various facts of this underlying, largest problematic, then we can reasonably hope that just as much as they propose different *solutions* to various problems, they also reveal slightly different aspects of *the problem itself*. In triangulating these different perceptions of the problem, we can begin to build a prismatic or three-dimensional understanding of a problem that, seen from only one or another angle alone, might appear distortedly monochromatic or flat. Thus, I propose that the ultimate end of the comparative study of ideas is a more adequate understanding of the nature of the underlying problematic, that is, a better model of the underlying "bumpy" landscape within which our philosophical and religious problems have existence, as do we ourselves.

The operational posits upon which this project is founded are therefore threefold, and these three posits form an interlocking and mutually supporting system orienting it to a set of larger philosophical-historical goals. In sum, those posits are: (1) that reference to a robust ontology of several types of real is indispensable and necessary to the interpretation of ideas; (2) that comparison is the inevitable method of the interpretation and history of ideas, and that comparison is likewise grounded in reference; and (3) that the ultimate task of a referentially and comparatively oriented history of ideas is to clarify the nature of the ground of that endeavour, that is, the nature of philosophical-religious reality-cum-problematic itself.

1.3.4 Defining the scope of the problem in terms of referents first, not terms, and a definition of "embodiment"

The first more specific methodological principle that stems from the foregoing reflections is that against the practice of studies of the problem of embodiment in Buddhism to date, it is necessary to define the scope of the problem in terms of its referent, not in terms of this or that particular word.

As I said above,[73] previous studies of the problematic of embodiment in Buddhism have failed to define the problem in this manner, instead allowing their purview in practice to be delimited almost exactly by the scope of the word *kāya* instead. In this study, by contrast, I attempt to give fair consideration to any significant idea or set of ideas which is apparently *about the body.* For these purposes, the body is understood as first and foremost *not* an idea, but the real and concrete dimension of human existence defined first by our "possession of" or "being in" a

[73] See above p. 13.

physical and biological body, and second, by all the relationships, situations and consequences in which that basic fact embroils us.

In this light, as the word "*em*bodiment" itself implies (along with the word "incarnation", which bears a conceptual relation to it), the problematic of embodiment, considered in *prima facie* terms, has two key dimensions. First, there must be a physical, biological body, in which we are embodied. Second, however, there must be "something", or more accurately, "someone", *embodied in* that body. In treating of Buddhism, which so strenuously and largely consistently denies the "person", the "self" and so on, this latter proposition obviously immediately entangles us in all sorts of fundamental difficulties. However, even if it does lead us into a doctrinal quagmire, it seems clear that some notion of "an embodied someone or something" must be implicit even in Buddhist notions of body and embodiment. Any ostensible body which is not "inhabited" by someone, that is, in which nobody is "embodied", is only in a derivative and even vestigial sense a "body" at all.[74]

With these considerations in mind, for the purposes of this dissertation, I define "embodiment" and "body" as follows:

> A "body" is a visible or otherwise tangible form in which some sentient being is actually or potentially present to sentient beings within the tangible world – most prototypically, present to other sentient beings, but also, by association and in certain special cases, present to itself. The interpretation of a physical object in the world as a body typically entails two dimensions: (1) that object must be sensed, usually by the

[74] The archetypal case here is of course the corpse, or "dead body", and even here, the lump of dead flesh is only called "body" in reference to the fact that it *did* embody someone, even if it does so no longer.

ordinary organs of sense; (2) the object must be interpreted as animated by a conscious, willing sentient being.

"Embodiment" refers to the act or state of entry by a sentient being into a body, so defined.

In this dissertation, I also frequently use the term "embodiment" nominally, to refer to a body, where I wish to emphasise dimension of the body in which a sentient being indwells in it or animates it (by contrast to inert bodies). I have perceived this necessity particularly often in dealing with claims that the Buddha is embodied in forms not usually understood to be ordinary bodies of typical sentient beings, such as embodiment in gnosis, relics understood as embodiments, and so on.

1.3.5 Relative dating in the Pāli materials

I now move on to consider methodological considerations bearing on the determination of the dates at which the various ideas studied here emerge. Given that this study is, in large part, a history, it is natural that the question of dates recurs throughout. Given the complex and heterogeneous nature of the materials we have to handle in trying to reconstruct this history, further, the task of determining dates is frequently complex and wearisome. Here, I will offer some general comments about two particular sets of problems that recur numerous times in this study: the relative dating of Pāli-canonical materials, and the dating of developments in Indian Buddhism from the evidence of the Chinese canon.

First, I turn to the Pāli materials. It is frequently a matter of moment to doctrinal history as a whole to determine as nearly as possible which ideas in the Pāli canon are earlier and which

are later. Unfortunately, problems in accurately determining the relative dates of Pāli materials seem too often to be virtually intractable.

Oskar von Hinüber's sober and authoritative overview of the state of knowledge about these texts, in his *Handbook of Pāli Literature,* considers the field on the whole insufficiently developed to pronounce reliably on such questions,[75] and indeed, his book is largely devoid of speculation as to even relative dates for the *dhammapiṭaka*, except for a peppering of gloomy pronouncements on the difficulty of knowing much reliable about dating questions for individual texts.

Similarly, K. R. Norman, in his 1983 *Pāli Literature* volume of Gonda's *A History of Indian Literature,* considers dating problems "complicated" and "in the absence of better criteria than we have at present, a very subjective matter", and thus, aside from some passing comments, refers the reader to Pande.[76]

A. K. Warder similarly gives some sober warnings about the dangers of assessment of dates on the basis of "such criteria as the development of the doctrine". He notes that Abhidhamma

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[75] At least this is how I understand von Hinüber's explanation for the fact that his survey covers only "the literary form of the texts". As he discusses a list of possible research agendas linking Buddhism to various kinds of historical context (the use of formulae shared with Jaina literature and contrasted with the Purāṇas; connections to earlier and contemporary Vedic literature etc.), he says, "Lastly, as far as the dating of texts is concerned, Buddhist literature can be compared to the development of material culture in ancient India, which, e.g., shows that the cultural environment of the first four Nikāyas of the Suttapiṭaka is markedly older than that of the Vinayapiṭaka. Once all these methodological possibilities have been used to uncover the development of early Buddhist texts, this could and must be compared to the development of Buddhism as a religion." He goes on immediately to say, "It is obvious that research has a long way to go to achieve all of this. Due to the lack of much preliminary study that is still necessary, special attention will be paid in the following to one aspect only, that is, the literary form of the texts;" 26. Despite this circumspection, von Hinüber not infrequently makes reference to the likely age of a text or texts: e.g. in his statement that parts of MN seem younger than DN, 33.

[76] Norman, *Pāli Lit.* X.

materials, for example, which are often assumed (along with anything resembling them) to be late on the basis of the fact that full-blown Abhidhamma *texts* are late, are "based not on, or not directly on, surveys of *Dhamma* (*Sutta*) texts but on old lists of *Mātikā* (*Mātṛkā*) of topics, elements and phenomena, which cannot be proved to be later than the *Dhamma-Vinaya* and may well have formed part of the earliest collection of *Dhamma*".[77] Similarly, he also notes problems with "the subjective argument that a religious movement necessarily starts on its career with beautiful and inspiring poetry, and afterwards loses its creative élan and produces only dry manuals of doctrine". Warder suggests that "one can equally convincingly argue the other way around: that Buddhism, for instance, began as one of the countless sects of early philosophical inquirers in India, each with its own system . . . and afterwards grew into a great popular movement with poets and preachers using all the literary arts to arouse and persuade the lay people on whom the success of the movement depended."[78] For these reasons, Warder conceives of his study as purposing in part "to deduce a chronology for some of the Canonical texts on metrical grounds",[79] such grounds being independent of speculation about doctrine.

In the face of these problems, and in the knowledge that this is the state of the field for any outsider to specialised Pāli studies, I have employed the following sources, criteria and principles to address dates of Pāli materials in this study.

First and foremost, the caution of both Norman and von Hinüber on these questions leaves this field the largely uncontested domain of Govind Pande's *Studies in the Origins of Buddhism.* I have therefore often had to refer to Pande as a first resort. Pande's often insightful work, however,

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[77] Warder, *Pāli Metre* 93.

[78] Warder, *Pāli Metre* 93.

[79] Warder, *Pāli Metre* 92.

is now half a century old, and there has certainly been a wealth of scholarship in the interim. Where possible, therefore, I have checked this against the opinion of Norman (where he does not simply refer to and follow Pande), and of von Hinüber where he gives one.

In addition to these studies, I have also made occasional use, where it proved relevant, of Paul Kingsbury's recent (2002) PhD dissertation. Kingsbury attempts to use the linguistic comprised by the distribution of aorist forms in order to conduct a content- (i.e. concept-) independent investigation into the relative age of various texts in the Pāli corpus. In a number of places through this dissertation, his aorist test has provided an independent hint of the relative date with regard to a text with regard to which I would otherwise have had no indication of date, and has to this extent been valuable.[80]

There have also been a few instances, especially in the case of the *Theragāthā,* the *Therīgāthā,* and the *Suttanipāta,* as they have been so thoroughly and meticulously studied by K. R. Norman, where it has been possible to adduce metre as a consideration in determining relative date, especially where material appears in the early *triṣṭubh/jagatī* metre. In respect of such questions, I have also made reference to the work of Warder.

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[80] Kingsbury's study is an exciting first foray into the use of computing methods to quantitatively analyse the linguistic details of digitised Buddhist texts in the attempt to examine not just questions of dating, but also authorship and doctrinal affiliation. This is a field that has vast and largely untapped potential. Unfortunately for our present purposes, Kingsbury's study is compromised by a significant methodological and empirical shortcoming. He does not, so far as I can determine, conduct any control tests against texts upon which Pande has already pronounced about the relative date, preferring rather to summarise Pande's findings at considerable length and then select as his target test corpus those texts not considered datable by Pande according to his methods. For us, this omission means most significantly that an opportunity is lost both to assess the accuracy of Pande's conjectures by content-independent methods, and, conversely, to assess the degree to which Kingsbury's method conforms to or runs against what is often the best opinion we have about dates on other criteria. Thus, despite the fact that much of Pande is summarised in Kingsbury, in fact, Pande and Kingsbury's findings are like two entirely independent bodies of evaluation, the value of each relative to the other it is almost impossible to determine.

Finally, in the case of the *Mahāparinibbāna-sutta* (MPNS, DN 16) as it bears upon the origins and age of the cult of relics and *stūpas,* I have also given consideration to the careful and authoritative arguments of André Bareau. In his assessment of the relative age of parts of MPNS, Bareau employs a different set of criteria to those underpinning the majority of assessments found in the sources above (though Pande and Norman both make occasional use of like arguments), in that he scrutinises all extant versions of the text, including Āgama versions extant in Chinese and versions of parts of the text also found in Vinaya sources, and argues that the most widely attested portions must have been extant before the Aśokan dispersion of Buddhist groups and textual transmission lineages. This criterion, especially when applied to significantly large bodies of text rather than single passages or concepts, has much potential if used with appropriate caution. In the absence of a systematic secondary assessment of all the Āgama parallels to the numerous Nikāya passages I have resorted to here, however, I have been unable to pursue the implications of this criterion for all the evidence I adduce, though I remain keenly aware that such a systematic study could well change some of the tentative judgements I arrive at about dates.

In using these various sources, I have tried in most cases to adopt the very conservative stance of excluding from consideration all judgements about dates that were dated upon conceptual criteria, that is, all judgements that dated the text on the basis of the place of its doctrinal content in a supposed trajectory of doctrinal development. This has necessitated the exclusion of a large number of Pande's judgements in particular, even in cases where I suspect that he has good reason for thinking that the trajectory of doctrinal development was as he supposes. I have proceeded on the general principle that the relative chronology of ideas should be dated as far as possible on a rich set of criteria *other than* ideas themselves, and only subsequently should we generalise an outline of doctrinal development and turn that around into a further

criterion for dating. In the current state of our knowledge about relative dating in the Pāli materials, such an exercise seems extremely premature.[81]

In lieu of such criteria, therefore, I have tried to rely to as great an extent as possible on a range of concept-independent criteria. These include (but are not limited to) such considerations as patterns of internal quotation among texts in the Pāli canon itself; the existence already within the Pāli canon of early commentaries on some texts; metre, as evaluated by such experts as Warder and Norman against overall models of the development of metre over time; Bareau's arguments about the widespread attestation of a text in multiple transmission lineages; Kingsbury's aorist test; and so on.

The consideration of questions of relative dating in the Pāli canon, based upon these secondary sources and proceeding according to these principles and criteria, frequently turned out to be quite complex for each topic examined within the Pāli-canonical period, and threatened thereby to derail the progress of the argument as it considered doctrinal content. For this reason, I have relegated all such discussions to Appendix 1 to this dissertation as a whole, where readers interested in seeing how I arrived at my conclusions about dating can consult them independently. In the body of my text, I merely make reference to that Appendix as appropriate.

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[81] I should note that although I have here seldom had recourse to such arguments myself, I do think that there are likely to be occasions where the careful examination of content, especially in comparison with related content in non-Buddhist contexts, holds out the hope of advancing discussions of questions of relative dating further than they can be advanced by criteria excluding content. I have in mind the arguments of the type pursued, if not the specific details of all examples contained, in such works as Alexander Wynne's *Origin of Buddhist Meditation,* Johannes Bronkhorst's *Two Traditions of Meditation,* Tilmann Vetter's *Ideas and Meditative Practices,* and Richard Gombrich's *How Buddhism Began.* Another instance of such argumentation that I believe is quite effective is the argument advanced e.g. by Pande (among other scholars; see also Wijesekera, "Concept of *Viññāṇa*") that there was an early stage in Buddhism in which the person was analysed into *viññāṇa* vs. *kāya*; see p. 1404 for references to aspects of this argument.

1.3.6 Use of the Chinese canon as evidence for dates of Indian developments

A second methodological problem relating to dating, which also recurs frequently in later portions of this dissertation in particular, is that of using the evidence of the Chinese canon to discern the chronology of developments in Indian Buddhism or in Buddhism at large. With the incredible new opportunities for research opened up by the digitisation in recent years of the Chinese canon in searchable format, it now constitutes a greater resource than ever for the study of Buddhist history not just in China, but in India also. The use of this evidence to this end requires obvious cautions, but at the same time, due to the particular nature of the Chinese bibliographic and historiographic traditions in comparison to the Indian, also provides us with kinds information we would not otherwise have access to if only we can observe those cautions appropriately.

Obviously, we cannot simply assume that the Chinese record provides us with an unproblematic mirror image of what was going on in India at a given time. Too many unknowns intervene between the point of origin of a new idea and the moment when the idea shows up in the Chinese record, including: the vagaries of geopolitics; the individual interests of missionary-translators; the (usually unknown) motives for mission work on the part of various doctrinal groups; the presumable interests of Chinese patrons and audiences; bandits and other calamities encountered by camel trains in the desert; storms at sea; and so on. It is frequently observed that anyone who was so naive as to believe that the Chinese record accurately reflects India would suspect, on its basis, that the dominant groups in Indian Buddhism from the first through to the end of the fourth century were Mahāyāna – a notion clearly belied by epigraphic evidence from the subcontinent itself.

Nonetheless, with appropriate caution, it is possible to use the Chinese record as a first approximation in examining certain kinds of questions, and there are also certain advantages to doing so.

The first advantage to the use of the Chinese record is that texts within it are very often (if not as often as colophons and catalogues would lead us to believe) quite precisely datable, in a period when next to nothing in India is so. With appropriate care to avoid being led up the garden path by mistaken or mistakenly pious attributions, etc., therefore, it is possible to examine the development of Buddhist ideas, at least those ideas reflected in the Chinese record and *as* they are reflected there, against quite a finely gradated scale of time.

Of course, we must first bear in mind, as Paul Harrison has argued,[82] that even the earliest Chinese translations (thinking here primarily of early Mahāyāna texts) apparently represent a stage in the growth of the texts translated at which a process of some accretion has already taken place. However, taking for the moment this phase of development as we find it at the inception of the Chinese record, it is at least possible for us to closely observe phases of development thereafter. Jan Nattier, for example, has argued convincingly[83] that for the examination of the early(-ish) Mahāyāna through the lens of the Chinese record, we should distinguish between three phases in the translation of Mahāyāna texts, centring the analysis on three seminal translators, thus:

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[82] "The most salient characteristic of [these] works [is that] although they obviously reflect an early stage of the Mahāyāna, they are not the products of its primitive or initial phase . . . . Rather, the overall content and presentation of the sūtras indicate that by the mid-second century C.E. the movement had already come some distance, and one may point out many well-developed features"; "Earliest Chinese Translations", 170.

[83] Unpublished talk for the Harvard University Buddhist Studies Forum, October 28 2002. I am grateful to Professor Nattier for giving me permission to cite this unpublished work.

Period I: to 200 C.E., represented by Lokakṣema;

Period II: to 265, represented by Zhi Qian;

Period III: to 310, represented by Dharmarakṣa.

In this dissertation, I extend this further extend this schema to include the wave of copious new translations produced by multiple translators in the few decades either side of 400 C.E.

I then use the overall schema as a rough yardstick against which to measure to a first approximation the development of certain key ideas, most significantly: the ideas of *dharmakāya* (§4.5.2, also §4.3.11) and *rūpakāya* (§4.5.3); the idea that the Buddha is immortal and embodied as such in adamant (*vajrakāya*) (Ch. 5.1); the corporeal reinterpretation of *sôpadhiśeṣa-* and *nirupadhiśeṣanirvāṇadhātu* (esp. §3.4.6, but cf. also §4.4.5 and §5.2.8); and the emergence of apparently alchemical ideas of aurifaction and immortality by elixirs, which may possible be related to the idea of *vajrakāya* (Appendix 2).

In a slightly different connection, that is without such close reference to this four-phase scheme, I also make use of the evidence of the Chinese canon to outline the change of Prajñāpāramitā ideas over time (Ch. 4.3); and I use Chinese translations to show that some instances of *dharmakāya* vs. *rūpakāya* found in extant Sanskrit texts seem to have found their way into the text in later versions than those attested by the earliest Chinese translations (§4.5.2, §4.5.3).

Given this extensive use of the Chinese evidence in this manner, several general comments are in order here.

First, Chinese evidence obviously shows a *terminus ad quem* for a text or idea, but not a point of origin. It is entirely possible that an idea could exist for hundreds of years before it shows up in the Chinese record, and we must therefore be very careful with arguments from its silence. On the other hand, this evidence obviously does allow us to conclude that once an idea shows up in the Chinese record, it must have been present in India also, that is, that ideas as well as texts are *at least* as old and early as the Chinese record shows them to be.

Second, however, in certain select cases, it seems to me, significant conclusions *can* be drawn from the certain kinds of silence in the Chinese record. For instance, in the case of all the ideas listed above – *dharmakāya* vs. *rūpakāya, sôpadhiśeṣa-* and *nirupadhiśeṣanirvāṇadhātu,* immortal Buddhas and their *vajrakāya,* aurifaction and elixirs – the Chinese record is silent to a certain point, and then it is suddenly rife with the idea in question, which erupts into multiple texts and contexts, often by multiple translators. In such cases, I contend that the pattern observed is significant. However old the ideas in question may or may not be prior to this eruption into the Chinese material, the fact that they are so suddenly everywhere is clear evidence that they are, even if not brand-new as such, *newly important*. Thus, some of the dangers of distortion occasioned by the distance of the Chinese record from the geographic point of origin of the ideas under study can be ameliorated if we change the type of question we ask of this record, and seek to discover in it not the precise points of origin of various ideas, but rather, the large trends that swept the world of Buddhist ideas in successive periods.

Used in this manner and with these precautions, the Chinese canon, even if imperfect, often arguably provides us with the best first approximation of the doctrinal history of relevant portions of this early period. Indeed, it is notable that on many occasions throughout this dissertation, for example, we will have occasion to observe, where it is possible to check the

extant Indic (Sanskrit and Tibetan) traditions against the finer record of stratification over time in the Chinese record, we would be much more seriously misled by relying upon the Indic version as somehow "authoritative" (as scholars have too often been wont to do in the past). Despite the potential pitfalls, therefore, recourse to the Chinese record for these purposes is certainly justifiable, and indeed, even indispensable.

Finally, it is also necessary to foreground here a caveat about my use of the Chinese canon in this manner, which I have occasion to repeat in specific places below. The Chinese canon is large, and the digital search tools we have, though powerful, do not obviate all necessity of time-consuming labour. In some cases, therefore, it has not been possible for me to exhaustively check all texts of relevant vintage in the canon, and I have therefore resorted to the expedient of examining the texts of major representative translators (often Lokakṣema, Zhi Qian, and Dharmarakṣa themselves) on the assumption that the findings therein will be approximately representative of their age. This assumption is not necessarily right, of course, and in such cases, which I note at each relevant juncture below, it is possible that I have missed relevant evidence that would require me to change my conclusions.

1.3.7 The problem of the single anomalous instance

The approach just outlined to the evidence of the Chinese canon, where I look for patterns evidenced by multiple instances in preference to relying heavily on phenomena attested there only once, is of a piece with a more general principle adopted in the work that follows, whereby I seek to avoid potential pitfalls associated with reliance on isolated, small pieces of evidence.

A methodological theme that has recurred a number of times throughout the work comprising this dissertation is that of what I will call the "single anomalous instance". It is frequently the

case that when we examine the overall pattern of evidence for a certain concept, the bulk of the evidence seems to point to a certain conclusion, but one isolated piece of often relatively slight evidence (occasionally two) bucks the overall trend and calls that conclusion into doubt.

For example, in §4.1.1 I claim that relics are clearly understood through much of the Buddhist tradition as veritable bodies of the Buddha, and in §4.1.2 I attempt to determine how far back we can trace this understanding. I find it is only possible to trace this conception to several Kharoṣṭhī reliquary inscriptions around the turn of the Common Era, at the earliest. However, there is one very remarkable exception to this pattern of evidence. That exception is the Bajaur Inscription, which should date to the second century B.C.E., and famously is supposed to speak of the relic "of Śākyamuni, endowed with life" (**prāṇasameta śākyamuneḥ*).

This remarkable inscription has been used very heavily by Gregory Schopen over the course of the last two decades in support of his challenging argument that relics of the Buddha are understood to be "alive" (which is a close relative and acknowledged inspiration for my own argument that they are veritable bodies), often with little indication of its exceptional status in the record generally. However, as I note in greater detail below, Harry Falk has recently argued (in 2005), quite convincingly in my opinion, that the key portions of the inscription making this characterisation of the Buddha's relics are fake.[84] This particular "single anomalous instance" is therefore a particularly telling representative of this general class of odd pieces of evidence, precisely because an influential and far-reaching argument in Buddhist Studies has been built so largely upon it, on the one hand, while on the other hand, the veridical status of that evidence has very recently been so effectively and dramatically called into question. In this case, therefore, with the benefits of Falk's arguments, it is clear that we should not follow

[84] For further details about this particular case, see below, p. 512 ff., also p. 468.

Schopen and build any large claims upon this single anomalous piece of evidence, and the implications are quite large – I am forced to wait nearly two whole centuries more before I think we can be relatively confidence that we see the conception that relics are veritable bodies.

Another such cautionary tale is offered, in my opinion, by the houses of cards that have been built largely on the sole evidence, supposedly pointing to an early proto-Tantric practice of sublimating sexual intercourse to spiritual ends, of the words *maithunasya parāvṛtti* in the *Mahāyānasūtrâlaṃkāra* (§5.2.2).

The question arises, then, how we should treat similarly anomalous single pieces of evidence in cases where we things are not as cut and dry as they seem to be made e.g. by Falk's new arguments. Variations on this problem repeatedly bedevils the dating of concepts:

- The overall evidence seems to show that *dharmakāya* so-named was probably not known before the third century, but the term *dhammakāya* does occur in a single instance in the Pāli canon (§3.2.1);
- The overall evidence seems to show that the opposition between the *dharmakāya* and the *rūpakāya* was unknown before the third century, but these terms occur in one chapter of the *Ratnâvalī,* which all authorities attribute without much hesitation to Nāgārjuna (see p. 998);
- On the overall evidence, we would arguably conclude that the corporeal reinterpretation of the opposition between *sôpadhiśeṣa-* and *nirupadhiśeṣanirvāṇadhātu* only arises, or at least becomes important, around the third or even fourth century C.E., but *Itivuttaka* 44 (in the Pāli canon) contains a clear, apparently very early version of this corporeal reading (§3.4.1);

- the overall pattern of the evidence seems to show that absolute immortality was only generally attributed to Śākyamuni Buddha around the fourth century C.E., but we find a single clear instance of this idea already in Dharmarakṣa's *Lotus Sūtra*, translated in the third century (§5.1.4);
- the overall pattern of the evidence seems to show that the docetistic interpretation of the *parinirvāṇa* was not current until the third century at the earliest, but we find a single clear instance of this idea in the *Niraupamyastava* attributed to Nāgārjuna (§4.2.11);
- the overall pattern of evidence seems to show that the notion of the actual eternity of the Buddhas and *bodhisattvas*, as opposed to their extreme longevity, was not current until the third century, but a relatively clear instance of this idea (predicated of the *bodhisattva*) seems to be found in the Chinese *Lokânuvartanā-sūtra* (§4.2.10).
- the overall pattern of evidence seems to show that docetistic Buddhalogy can only be shown clearly in Mahāsāṃghika/Lokôttaravāda contexts as late as the third or fourth centuries, and yet related ideas appear in the *Fenbie gongde lun,* which cataloguers ascribe to the Han; this same texts also contains a clear docetistic interpretation of the *parinirvāṇa,* a notion otherwise attested only from the time of Dharmarakṣa and in the also seemingly anomalous *Niraupamyastava*.[85]

Obviously there is no one-size-fits-all to these various problems, and they must be treated on a case-by-case basis, as will be seen from reference to the details of the way I handle each case below. However, there is room for some general comment about such single anomalous

[85] On the several problems reconciling the contents of this text with its supposed Han provenance, see n. 1371.

instances as a class, and for the elaboration of a basic, common method for handling them. The basic strategy adopted here is as follows.

Given that we know in general that the tradition is rife with interpolations, accretionally composed stratified texts, and the attribution of texts to figures other than their probable actual author from various motives, it seems important to acknowledge that in any individual case we are often dealing with an unknown quantity in some degree. For this reason alone, it seems preferable to avoid building any important conclusions about doctrinal history too squarely upon any single piece of evidence; we have already noted above two cautionary tales of what can happen if we fail to observe this principle. The more conservative and less risky approach, rather, is to look first for the multiple attestation of an idea in more than one text or context, where we can, and only to admit as a second resort the testimony of single pieces of evidence where they are particularly strong.

In many of the cases mentioned, this has resulted in a situation where I note the anomalous exception, but still prefer to bracket it out in the process of generalisation and regard the larger pattern of evidence as the more reliable guide to important moments in doctrinal history. This obviously is less than ideal, in that it exposes my conclusions to a certain degree of doubt; but this uncertainty seems to me to be in the nature of the evidence itself, and would be stronger, in my opinion, if I built on the single early anomalies in each case. Finally, we may also plead in favour of this approach that even where it leads us astray as regards the very earliest instance of a certain idea and perhaps, therefore, its actual origins, attention to periods where we first see multiple attestations will guide us relatively accurately to the moments when ideas became *significant* in doctrinal history, and this moment is often more important

than the moment of absolute origin *per se* in discerning the large outline of the development of ideas.

1.3.8 Scope and limitations of this dissertation

Obviously, the period I attempt to cover in this dissertation is very long, and the totality of Buddhist literature and other possibly relevant evidence over the whole of that period is copious. It has therefore been impossible for me to study everything. Four main criteria have governed my selection of primary materials for study, out of all the material that exists.

First, I have studied material that has already been targeted by exponents of the "standard view" described in Ch. 1.1 above.[86] This was obviously necessary in order to adequately reassess that standard view. The material identified by former studies is in many cases genuinely important for the study of the history of Buddha bodies, even where my interpretation of that material differs from the standard view. In other cases, it was necessary to examine it if only to explain why it does not have the importance previously ascribed to it. Primary materials included for these reasons include, for example, the Pāli-canonical passages usually cited as evidence of an early **dharmakāya*;[87] the *Lokânuvartanā-sūtra,* important for its early articulation of docetistic doctrines;[88] the "early middle" Mahāyāna texts from the Lokakṣema corpus adduced by Paul Harrison in support of his "Mainstream *dharmakāya*";[89] *Mahāyānasūtrâlaṃkāra* passages seminal in the first articulation of *trikāya* doctrine;[90] and so on.

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[86] See esp. the studies listed in n. 5.

[87] See Ch. 3.2.

[88] See Ch. 4.2, esp. §§4.2.7-4.2.10.

[89] See Ch. 4.3, esp. §§4.3.8-4.3.10.

[90] See Ch. 5.3, esp. §§5.3.4-5.3.5 and 5.3.6.2.

Second, I have also included material useful for the critical assessment of aspects of the standard view, even where exponents of the standard view have not themselves usually used such texts. For example, in assessing the claim of the standard view that the "two-body" theory of the Buddha's embodiments originates with the Sarvâstivāda, I expanded the range of Sarvâstivāda texts examined beyond the usual *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* and perhaps the **Mahāvibhāṣā,* to include the earlier seven canonical texts culminating in the *Jñānaprasthāna.*[91] Similarly, in assessing the usual role assigned to so-called Mahāsāṃghika ideas, and the dates implicitly ascribed to those ideas in order that they could play this role, it was necessary for me to consider almost the whole range of available early evidence for Mahāsāṃghika positions.[92] Similar considerations have governed the selection of a broader range of primary passages for the analysis of Pāli-canonical notions of *manomayakāya*[93] and *sa-* and *anupādisesanibbānadhātu;*[94] consideration of previously untreated aspects of Lokakṣema's *Aṣṭasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā;*[95] the use of multiple translations of Prajñāpāramitā texts from different historical layers of the Chinese canon;[96] the inclusion of passages from the *Ratnagotravibhāga* and the *Saṃdhinirmocana-sūtra* in the study of *trikāya*; and so on.

Third, I have also incorporated materials that has never to my knowledge been considered relevant by exponents of the standard view, in the attempt to study a range of ideas that I

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[91] See esp. §4.4.11.

[92] See §§4.2.3-4.2.6.

[93] See Ch. 2.3.

[94] See Ch. 3.4.

[95] See Ch. 4.3, esp. §§4.3.2-4.3.8.

[96] Instances spread throughout Ch. 4.3.

argue should in fact be considered part of the overall discourse of embodiment in Buddhism. Here, I had to be initially guided by my hunches about which ideas had such relevance, and by my certainly imperfect knowledge of the sources likely to prove most relevant to the study of such ideas. Materials included for this reason include the Pāli-canonical materials studied for notions of ordinary given embodiment[97] and the deathless (*amata*) as a characterisation of the religious ideal;[98] inscriptional and textual evidence adduced for my arguments about relics;[99] the materials used for the study of the notion of embodiment in adamant and immortality;[100] and materials about the "revolutionary transformation of the basis" (*āśrayaparāvṛtti*).[101]

Fourth and finally, I have also made heavy use of electronic search tools in the attempt to locate relevant materials and ideas in the texts, and the results of such searches have led me to texts of whose relevance I would otherwise have been unaware in many cases. In this regard, I was most heavily reliant upon the several electronically searchable versions of the Pāli canon,[102] and upon the digitised version of the Chinese canon made available by the Chinese

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[97] See Ch. 2.1.

[98] See Ch. 2.2.

[99] See Ch. 4.1. In this section, I allowed myself to be guided by the various secondary studies cited there. However, I also examined the Kharoṣṭhī inscriptional evidence more carefully than I believe previous scholars of relics have done. I was initially motivated in this decision by the simple fact that it was the only material I knew of that promised to shed any light on the "chronological black box" that intervenes between the close of the Pāli canon and the inception of our Chinese record.

[100] See Ch. 5.1.

[101] See Ch. 5.2. In identifying materials for study in this section, I was heavily reliant on the previous secondary studies of Davidson and especially Sakuma.

[102] *Pali Canon: Online Database,* http://www.chaf.lib.latrobe.edu.au/dcd/pali.htm. I also made us of the zip packet of html files made available on the *Journal of Buddhist Ethics* website, http://jbe.gold.ac.uk/palicanon.html, downloaded December 18 2006; and the full text available online at http://www.tipitaka.org/tipitaka/booklistframe2.html.

Buddhist Electronic Text Association.[103] I also made necessarily more limited use of a piecemeal set of digitised Sanskrit texts I have assembled from various sources. Important instances of materials identified for study by at least partly these means include many of the Pāli-canonical materials studied in Chapters 2 and 3; materials used in the attempt to discover the date of origin of the opposition between *dharmakāya* and *rūpakāya*;[104] materials relating to embodiment in adamant and immortality;[105] and materials in the Chinese record for the study of *sa-* and *nirupadhiśeṣanirvāṇadhātu.*[106] I also relied on the help of such search tools to help me find my way through the large Sarvâstivāda Abhidharma corpus.[107]

These selection criteria are obviously to some extent arbitrary, and certainly imperfect, and I am aware that it is likely that I have missed relevant materials. I have tried to acknowledge resulting limitations to my conclusions, and the confidence that can be placed in them, at each specific point where they arise in this study. The identification of further relevant materials, and the consideration of their implications for the overall picture of the history of Buddhist ideas of embodiment, remains an open agenda for ongoing research.

I should also note that I am aware that my coverage of secondary literature relevant to the overall problematic of embodiment in Buddhism is also not exhaustive. This shortcoming was in part the result of pressures of time and space, and I hope to address it in future versions and

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[103] *Taishō daizōkyō* 大正大蔵経, Chinese Buddhist Electronic Text Association CBReader CD Rom, V2.0.7 (2004).

[104] See Ch. 4.5.

[105] See Ch. 5.1.

[106] See §3.4.6.

[107] See Ch. 4.4.

developments of this work. In selecting secondary material for inclusion, I tried to let myself be guided by estimates of which studies would be most directly relevant to the specific questions I had decided to address, and relevant to my revised vision of the overall history of ideas about embodiment as it gradually emerged from my ongoing work. I also decided early on to leave out of consideration certain aspects of the problematic of embodiment that have been treated recently by other scholars, in the understanding that it would be more efficient to concentrate on relatively neglected aspects of the overall problematic.[108] All these judgements were of course in large degree a matter of guesswork. Once more, therefore, I must acknowledge that it is possible that I have omitted relevant material, and that my failure to be exhaustive is a limitation on this study and the faith that can be placed in its conclusions.

1.4 Outline

Against the standard view I characterised at the outset of this General Introduction (Ch. 1.1), this dissertation will argue the principal theses described earlier (Ch. 1.2), on the basis of the foregoing methodological principles and with recourse to the foregoing methods based upon them (Ch. 1.3). The order of the exposition will be roughly chronological, attempting to study earlier materials before later wherever possible. In select cases I will break with this principle where the integrity of a certain topic of discussion demands it. The dissertation thus falls into four main chapters (Ch. 2-5), each treating respectively the following chronological strata: the early Pāli-canonical period; the late Pāli-canonical period; the early post-canonical period, spanning roughly the first three centuries of the Common Era; and the fourth to early fifth centuries. Each of these chapters is divided into a number of major topics in the history of the

[108] I am thinking particularly of works like Susanne Mrozik, *Virtuous Bodies: The Physical Dimensions of Morality in Buddhist Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); Reiko Ohnuma, *Head, Eyes, Flesh and Blood: Giving Away the Body in Indian Buddhist Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007); and Wilson, *Charming Cadavers* (to which I do make limited reference, and which is therefore listed in my bibliography).

doctrine of embodiments that fall within the chronological period treated by the chapter overall. Thus, in outline, the dissertation proceeds as follows.

Chapter Two treats the early Pāli-canonical period.

In Chapter 2.1, I treat ordinary, given embodiments in the Pāli-canonical materials, dividing the treatment between two basic modes of conceiving of embodiment: the given physical body (§2.1.1), and the given social body (§2.1.2). In both cases, I argue that embodiment as such is conceived of as a fundamentally negative thing. In later parts of the chapter, I argue that the goal of religious practice and realisation with regard to these bodies is correspondingly best conceived of as a kind of *dis*embodiment, that is, as an escape from embodiment altogether. This claim is true for practice as it affects both ordinary given social embodiment (§2.1.2, again) and physical embodiment (§2.1.3). Taken as a whole, this material forms an important and hitherto neglected point of departure for the problematic of embodiment in Buddhism, showing that the drive to discover ideal and adequate forms of embodiment is the mirror image of a radical dissatisfaction with ordinary embodiment as a key component of the problem of suffering.

In Chapter 2.2, I continue the exploration of the problem represented by ordinary given embodiment with the examination of a related set of ideas in the same layer of the record, which conceives of the religious ideal as a conquest of death. The most important member of this set of related ideas is the characterisation of the religious ideal as "(the) undying" (*amata,* Skt. *amṛta*); but this idea is part of a larger complex of related ideas, including the conquest of Māra ("the killer" etc.); the symbolism of liberation as the release (or quenching) of fire; associations between important aspects of early Buddhism and funerary symbolism and

locations; and charnel-ground meditations on death. Taken as a whole, I argue, this pattern shows that the conquest of death was an important dimension of the religious goal in early Buddhism. Given that death is in the first instance a bodily matter, this shows by implication that the mortal body is, once more, radically inadequate, and a key part of the problematic of suffering. It is correspondingly unsurprising to find that the realisation of the religious ideal entails the escape from or radical transformation of the mortal condition of ordinary embodiment.

This material on the conquest of death as a dimension of the religious ideal also forms an important part of the background for developments examined later in the dissertation, where we see that eventually the Buddha was understood to be truly immortal and embodied as such (Ch. 5.1).

In Chapter 2.3, I examine the notion of *manomayakāya* or the "body made of mind". I show that *manomayakāya* is not predicated primarily or even particularly of the Buddha. It is rather the common property of a broad and somewhat heterogeneous class of spiritually and cosmologically elevated beings. I also show that in the Buddhist context, it is to be interpreted primarily with reference to the old model of the path of practice and realisation found in the *Sāmaññaphala-sutta*. I argue that in the context of that model, it is best understood as following immediately upon the heels of rejection of ordinary, given embodiment as inadequate, and elaborated as a more satisfactory alternative thereto. *Manomayakāya* is presented as a stepping-stone to and indispensable condition of final realisation, but not as an intrinsic part of the state so realised. In this role, it can probably be related to the concept of "touching with the body" as the surest kind of knowledge. In sum, I conclude that *manomayakāya* is a sign of a move in the direction of recognising a less unequivocally negative dimension to embodiment, but that it

is not yet a truly *ideal* embodiment, and that it is also important to note that it is not a special body of the Buddha as such.

Chapter Three treats further ideas in the Pāli-canonical materials, which on balance are likely to date from the later end of those materials.

Chapter 3.1 treats the only remaining important positive notion of embodiment in this period, namely the doctrine of the body of thirty-two marks of the "great man" (*mahāpuruṣa*). I argue that objective consideration of the scant evidence available on the question does not give us any reason to be sure the Buddhist idea of the *mahāpuruṣa* originates in the so-called "ethical" variant of this doctrine, whereby the category of *mahāpuruṣa* refers primarily to the gnostic realisation of liberation and its moral concomitants, and only later and by compromise with populist notions to physiognomic characteristics. I also argue that there is not really any strong evidence to regard this doctrine as significantly non-Buddhist in its origin, despite the claims of Buddhist texts and the understanding of secondary scholars to date to the contrary. On the whole, however, I conclude that even the dominant physiognomic interpretation of the category probably does not date back, in any full-fledged form, to the earliest strata of the canon, for which reason I include these ideas here rather than in Chapter 2. I end the chapter by arguing that the idea of embodiment in a body characterised by the thirty-two marks is a significant shift in the direction of recognising possibilities of positive and adequate embodiment. I also note that strictly speaking, the body of marks is, especially at first, a body of the *bodhisattva* (the Buddha-to-be) rather than the Buddha himself, and as such, is also not yet a special body of the Buddha in the full sense.

In Chapter 3.2, I turn my attention to the negative task of showing that contrary to received opinion, there is no real notion of "the *dhammakāya*", in any sense that term is understood in later contexts, in the Pāli canon. To this end, I examine the single instance of the *term dhammakāya* in the Pāli canon, and also a range of other passages that are often adduced as evidence that the concept was already current.

In Chapter 3.3, I summarise my findings for the Pāli-canonical period as a whole. Having disposed of the phantom Pāli-canonical **dhammakāya*, and with the *manomayakāya* and the body of marks the only remaining contenders for the title of "special body of the Buddha", I argue that there is in fact no full-blown conception of special embodiments adequate to buddhahood in this period. Thus, despite the stirrings in the direction of more positive conceptions that we detect in *manomayakāya* and the body of marks, the overall tone of Pāli-canonical ideas about embodiment remains predominantly negative, just as it began in the rejection of ordinary given embodiments and the pursuit of *dis*embodiment as an ideal.

Chapter 3.4 is an Appendix to Chapter Three, in which I argue that the concepts of *saupādisesa-* and *anupādisesanibbānadhātu* were in the Pāli-canonical period almost entirely *not* concepts to do with embodiment. This is important because these paired concepts were later to become important ideas about the somatic corollaries of liberation (in the Sanskritised guise of *sôpadhiśeṣa-* and *nirupadhiśeṣanirvāṇadhātu*). The actual meanings of these concepts in the Pāli-canonical period are of somewhat tangential relevance to the central topic of this study, but this background is important in order that we can appreciate the significance (and timing) of the shift that was to occur later. Subsequent vicissitudes of these terms are traced in the context of other studies later in the dissertation, in §4.4.5, §5.2.8, and the conclusion to Chapter Five (Ch. 5.5).

Chapter Four treats materials in the early post-Pāli canonical period, covering a span of time from around the turn of the Common Era to around the third century (as evidenced in the Chinese translational record).

In Chapter 4.1, I contend that the relics of the Buddha are best understood within the larger framework of the problematic of embodiment. This is one of the most significant perspectives opened up by the definition of the field of the body in Buddhism by reference to the problematic of embodiment at large, rather than by a single term (such as *kāya;* see §1.3.4). Relics, that is to say, are first and foremost *bodies* of the Buddha, as the term *śarīrāṇi* implies, and recognition of this fact paves the way for the further recognition that ideas about relics and about other embodiments of the Buddha have been in a constant relation throughout most of Buddhist history. In the first part of the chapter (§4.1.1), I depart temporarily from the generally chronological order of exposition of this dissertation, and argue these basic contentions on the basis of a broad range of evidence from many different Buddhist contexts right down to the second millennium. Subsequently (§4.1.2), I examine the evidence for the earliest phases of ideas about relics, and conclude that it cannot be shown with any certainty that they were understood as veritable embodiments of the Buddha in the Pāli-canonical period. Rather, the first firm evidence of this understanding is not found in the canonical texts at all, but in evidence from reliquary inscriptions in Kharoṣṭhī from around the turn of the Common Era. In support of this contention, I advance an innovative interpretation of the longest such inscription, the Senavarma Inscription.

In the latter part of this same section (Ch. 4.1), I argue that this same recognition that relics are understood as veritable bodies of the Buddha serves two further purposes. First (§4.1.3), and

more generally, I contend that it is an interpretation of relics that is closer to their actual emic significance for much of the Buddhist tradition than the various interpretations that have been advanced in secondary literature. Second (§4.1.4), and more relevantly to the task to hand in this dissertation, I argue that this insight enables us to see that relics are in fact the earliest datable special bodies of the Buddha to emerge in Buddhism. This suggests that the large shift to effabilist and then kataphatic notions of adequate embodiments of buddhahood observable over the course of this history begins with the *de facto* and perhaps originally implicit categories of cultic practice. The celebrated inspired formulae of new *sūtras,* and the reflections of scholastic doctors, may therefore represent later, *post hoc* reactions to this practical development.

Chapter 4.2 examines the emergence of docetistic Buddhalogy, that is, of the doctrine that the Buddha's final earthly incarnation and his acts therein were a mere show for the salvation of sentient beings, that do not reveal or embody his true nature. The argument here proceeds in two main steps, one negative and critical, and one positive and constructive. First, I argue, on the basis of a careful examination of the extant evidence, that we cannot show that these ideas originate in the Mahāsāṃghika-Lokôttaravāda, despite the almost universal understanding that this is the case. Subsequently, I examine what is in fact the earliest context in which we find these ideas, the *Lokânuvartanā-sūtra* (especially as translated by Lokakṣema in the late second century C.E.). I argue that it is circular to argue on the basis of its docetism that this text belongs to a "Lokôttaravāda" school. Rather, a balanced assessment of the contents of the text in the context of its time shows that the docetistic Buddhalogy of the text is coherently and intimately related to the emergent Mahāyāna "metaphysic", which is clearly evidenced in other portions of the text. Docetism is connected in particular to a conception of the Buddha as actually identical to (if not yet quite explicitly "embodied" in) the truth of all things, i.e. the

Mahāyāna "absolute". The most reasonable conclusion this evidence points to is that docetistic Buddhalogy originates as a squarely Mahāyāna doctrine, and that as such, it is merely part and parcel of a broader "ontological/metaphysical docetism" (i.e. a gnosticism or illusionism) that holds all phenomenal existents to be mere appearance.

Chapter 4.3 turns to the examination of ideas of embodiment in the earliest Prajñāpāramitā literature, as evidenced primarily in the earliest translation of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā-sūtra* (the "Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand [Lines]"). I argue, first, that the embodiment doctrine of this early version of the text is more complex than has been recognised previously, and includes: a central claim that the Buddha is embodied in his gnosis (here, his omniscience *sarvajñatā*); a (possibly related) claim that he is embodied in the five "pure aggregates" (*anāsravaskandha*); and a trumping by these embodiments, and corresponding devaluation, of the merit of the relics of the Buddha. These facts suggest strongly that these new conceptions of embodiment may have emerged precisely in reaction to the cult of relics examined as part of the history of the Buddha's embodiments in Ch. 4.1. Most importantly, however, I argue that we cannot be certain that this or any other Lokakṣema text reflects the presence of the *term dharmakāya* at this stage in doctrinal history (the evidence here is complex), but the text already evinces the notion of the Buddha's identity to and embodiment in the Mahāyāna "absolute", that is, it evinces the important lineaments of *dharmakāya* doctrine in all *but* name. I further trace key ideas through various versions of the text attested by Chinese translations of different dates, and show that the embodiment doctrine of the Sanskrit version of the text is in fact probably very late indeed, even though it has usually been treated by scholars to date as reflecting "the" Prajñāpāramitā or at best an early Prajñāpāramitā doctrine of the Buddha's embodiments.

These patterns are also observable in other texts in the Lokakṣema corpus, which I examine briefly late in the section (§4.3.9, §4.3.10). On the basis of these facts, and also in coordination with the findings of other sections of this dissertation (Ch. 3.2, Ch. 4.4, Ch. 4.5), I begin to advance one of my most significant claims – that the *dharmakāya* emerges organically within Mahāyāna contexts, from Mahāyāna concerns, and that there is no "Mainstream" understanding earlier than it to which we can point as its predecessor. In this section especially, but throughout this dissertation, this claim is articulated most immediately as a refutation of the influential interpretation of Paul Harrison, and in §4.3.13 I summarise my disagreements with Harrison's position.

Chapter 4.4 examines the actual Sarvâstivāda Abhidharma doctrine of the Buddha's embodiments, as opposed to the misrepresentation of those ideas that has dominated in the secondary literature to date. It also examines the evidence for the actual most likely date of those ideas. The argument therefore advances in two main steps.

I take the **Mahāvibhāṣā* to be the most seminal text for this question. It is the earliest to treat the problem of embodiment comprehensively, and was an authoritative text for the tradition. I show that there is no opposition between the *dharmakāya* and the *rūpakāya* as special bodies of the Buddha in the **Mahāvibhāṣā*. Rather, the *rūpakāya* is a kind of embodiment predicated of many kinds of sentient being, but only very rarely of the Buddha; and in the many passages where the text does discuss the problem of the Buddha's two kinds of embodiment, it opposes to the *dharmakāya* rather a "body of birth" (Ch. *shengshen* 生身) or "body born of father and mother" (Ch. *fumu shengshen* 父母生身). I show, further, that the concept of *dharmakāya* is more complex in this text and literature than has been previously recognised. Two major conceptions of *dharmakāya* coexist side by side: (1) embodiment in the "qualities of those

requiring no further training" (*aśaikṣadharmas*); (2) embodiment in the eighteen "unique qualities of a Buddha" (*āveṇikadharmas*). Moreover, both of these conceptions, when analysed, can be shown to share surprising common ground with the early Prajñāpāramitā, in that they boil down to the idea of the Buddha's embodiment in his special gnosis.

Second, I show further, by a careful examination of ideas about embodiment in the sevenfold canon of the Sarvâstivāda Abhidharma that precede the **Mahāvibhāṣā,* that the **Mahāvibhāṣā* itself is by and large the *first* text in this corpus to evince much interest in the problematic of the Buddha's special embodiments at all, let alone this (corrected) twofold model. On consideration of the evidence available to us for the dates of these texts, and the likely ongoing accretional and stratified manner of their composition, I argue that we therefore have no reason for thinking that these concerns and concepts are very much older in the Sarvâstivāda Abhidharma than the earliest translation of (part of) the **Mahāvibhāṣā* in 386 C.E. I contend, therefore, that the received view that holds that a twofold model of the Buddha's embodiments was adopted by the Mahāyāna *from* the Sarvâstivāda is baseless and implausible in chronological terms, as well as in terms of the actual content of the Sarvâstivāda position.

Chapter 4.5 turns to a brief and preliminary examination of the question of where the twofold opposition between the *dharmakāya* and *rūpakāya did* in fact come from, if it was thus not a Sarvâstivāda invention. I base this survey primarily on the evidence of translations in the Chinese canon, though I cross-check against the extant Sanskrit literature where I can. There are troubling exceptions to the pattern of the evidence in one work attributed to Nāgārjuna. However, overall it seems that both *dharmakāya* so-named, and also its opposition to *rūpakāya,* emerge in close chronological proximity – perhaps even simultaneously – sometime around the first part of the third century C.E. The evidence also seems to indicate that these ideas first

emerge in predominantly Mahāyāna contexts, and that the opposition to *rūpakāya,* in particular, may surprisingly have some connection with the proto-*Avataṃsaka* corpus.

In the conclusion to this chapter, i.e. Chapter 4.6, I note that the consideration of the evidence of Chapter 4.2-4.5 taken together strongly suggests that the following significant ideas are all products of a Mahāyāna context and reflect Mahāyāna concerns: (1) the nascent notion of the *dharmakāya* attested in the first phase of the Chinese; (2) the *dharmakāya* so-named; (3) the notion of an opposition between the *dharmakāya* and another "type" of special Buddha-body; and therefore (3) the whole explicit discourse of types of *buddhakāya,*. By contrast, the evidence for a supposed "Mainstream Schools" phase of Buddha-body doctrine does not stand up to scrutiny, and the most economical and plausible interpretation of the evidence is that the ideas we do find in Mahāsāṃghika/Lokôttaravāda and Sarvâstivāda contexts are probably adoptions of and reactions to these originally Mahāyāna ideas.

Chapter Five examines a series of new developments in ideas about embodiments in Buddhism that emerge in the fourth through early fifth centuries, a period which these developments show to have been, as a whole, a time of remarkable creative ferment in doctrines about the body.

In Chapter 5.1, I examine the emergence by this period of the doctrine, very remarkable at first blush, that the Buddha is in fact immortal, that this immortality is realised in a body which is of adamant (*vajrakāya*), and that his *parinirvāṇa* is therefore merely a docetistic show. Once more through the analysis of the evidence in the Chinese translational record, I show that this idea emerges from a gradual process of development. At the inception of the Chinese record, we can already see that spatially and temporally remote Buddhas are ascribed with hyperbolically

long lifespans that are difficult to distinguish in principle from actual immortality. These Buddhas may also already be ascribed with actual immortality in the same texts. Certainly, by the *Lotus* translation of Dharmarakṣa in the second half of the third century, actual immortality is ascribed to the Buddha of this Sahā world, Śākyamuni, and the *parinirvāṇa* is regarded as a docetistic show. Meanwhile, also from as early as we can trace in the Chinese record, the Buddha's (actual) body is said to be like adamant in various respects. In the fourth century, these various strands come together, and we see a sudden wave of texts ascribing Buddhas with actual immortality, docetising the *parinirvāṇa,* and, most importantly for our purposes, correlating these claims with the more specific claim that the Buddha's body is actually made of adamant, and that the specific relevance of this is that it is utterly indestructible.

Beyond these developmental steps leading to the notion of the Buddha's immortal embodiment in adamant, I also refer these notions, more generally, back to the very old identification of the religious ideal as "the undying", examined in Ch. 2.2; and I connect it to the idea that the Buddha's most veritable embodiment is in the Mahāyāna absolute, which itself is conceived of as immutable and eternal.

In Chapter 5.2, I survey the range of interpretations of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* ("revolutionary transformation of the basis") advanced in this period when it was first elaborated, looking first at the *Yogācārabhūmi* and then beyond to a cluster of other key (mainly Yogācāra) texts. I propose that *āśrayaparāvṛtti* derives its meaning from a primary reference to the problematic of embodiment. The referent of first resort for *āśraya* ("base") is the body – the physical body first and foremost, but also the "psychophysical complex", including various mental functions and instances, as a locus or medium of embodiment more broadly conceived. I then argue that the vicissitudes of the concept in this period, whereby *āśraya* and *āśrayaparāvṛtti* alike take on a

series of ever less intuitive and more apparently arcane meanings, can be interpreted as a series of dialectical moves to strategically refigure our notion of embodiment, and most particularly, to challenge our commonsensical understanding of our given embodiment in ways that begin to move us in the direction of the modes of embodiment characteristic of liberation.

In Chapter 5.3, I consider *trikāya* ("three bodies") doctrine itself, in the new light cast on it by this dissertation's revisioning of the problematic of embodiment as the context for its meaning. My main aim in this chapter is to elucidate the connections between *trikāya* and other ideas about embodiments, as close to its original scene of elaboration as possible. To this end, I consider a threefold set of interrelated early texts: the *Mahāyānasūtrâlaṃkāra,* the root verses of the *Ratnagotravibhāga* (with reference also to its *Vyākhyā*), and the *Saṃdhinirmocana-sūtra.* The latter text is related to the *Vyākhyā* via an otherwise very unusual pairing of conceptions of embodiment, and consideration of the relationship between the two contexts of this pairing leads to the discovery of other links between the texts in question and *Mahāyānasūtrâlaṃkāra* itself.

On this basis, I advance the following arguments. First, *trikāya* seems originally to have been intended as an extension of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* doctrine – a kind of "What next?", and a consideration of what is special about the *āśrayaparāvṛtti* of the Buddha as opposed to other Arhats etc. This connection helps carry us a long way towards an understanding of *how* exactly *trikāya* is intended to serve as a synthesis of various types of embodiment, beyond the mere fact *that* it is so intended. Second, there is a key point of ambiguity and contention within these texts – the question of which embodiments are for the sake of Buddha himself, and which for the sake of other sentient beings. This reveals that right from its very origins, *trikāya,* rather

than representing a stable synthesis and perfect consummation, was riven at its heart by key tensions inherent in the very notion of embodiment of the Buddha.

In Chapter 5.4, I build on this last insight and extend it, in sketch form, into the post-history of models of the Buddha's multiple embodiments in the period after *trikāya*. I show that *trikāya* does not represent the last word on Buddha-body doctrine. Rather, the disintegration of the model into even more complex sets of bodies was a regular phenomenon, and this disintegration repeatedly took place along the fault lines traced by exactly the key tension identified as present already at the outset in Ch. 5.3. I intend that Ch. 5.3 and 5.4 in combination will thus strike a heavy blow against the regnant teleological reading of *trikāya.* Though it was indeed an influential and authoritative model for later tradition, it was also only one moment in an ongoing and fraught history of ideas about embodiment that continued to develop just as much after its articulation as before.

Chapter Six is the General Conclusion to this dissertation. In it, I address myself to three final tasks.

In Chapter 6.1, I present an outline history of key developments in the doctrine of embodiments in Buddhism, as a summary of the findings about textual fact in this dissertation.

In Chapter 6.2, I suggest a range of problems that I think would warrant further study. In combination, these suggestions show that even a study as large as this one merely scratches the surface of the problem of embodiments in Buddhism and its implications for our larger concerns in the study of religion, philosophy, and intellectual history, and ultimately, our understanding of our basic nature and situation as human beings.

In Chapter 6.3, I attempt to consider some aspects of the significance of the ideas this dissertation describes. Here I return to the larger comparative and philosophical questions that ultimately animate this project. In keeping with some of the methodological-philosophical posits I introduced earlier in this introduction, I propose first that Buddhist ideas about embodiments are to understood first and foremost by reference not to some conjectured, culturally remote, relative and alien "worldview", but with reference to the basic human fact of embodiment, as one of the most intimate facts of our own existence. I reiterate my understanding that it is only possible upon the basis of such a hermeneutic approach to engage in the comparative study of these ideas.

On this basis, I argue that Buddhist ideas about embodiments are to be always to be understood as a radical and thoroughgoing critique of our ordinary given embodiment, on the one hand, but also, on the other, as a very serious set of claims that something better, and radically adequate, is indeed possible. This latter dimension of Buddhism ideas about embodiment, I suggest, is particularly challenging for our own historical context. The pursuit of this promise, however, is a also matter for future work, and in a very real sense, the large amount of detailed factual work that comprises the bulk of this dissertation is merely a prolegomenon to such a future project.

CHAPTER TWO: GIVEN AND IDEAL EMBODIMENT IN THE EARLY PĀLI CANON, AND ITS CONTEXT IN SEVERAL PROBLEMATICS

"Death, where is thy sting?"
1 Corinthians 15:55

Introduction

In this chapter, I begin tracing the chronology of ideas of embodiment in Buddhist discourse and practice. As I already stipulated above (§1.3.5), for our purposes, a broad division of Pāli-canonical Buddhism into clearly early and relatively late will be ample. This chapter, then, confines itself to materials certainly present in the early layers of the Pāli canon.

The chapter falls into three main sections.

In the first section, we will examine the way the given body is understood at the inception of the Buddhist tradition. Any normative vision always carries with it, like a shadow, a descriptive vision of the problem to which it is posed as a solution. In this case, the descriptive shadow of normative visions of the Buddha's perfected physicality are to be found in various doctrines about the bodies of other sentient beings. If the tradition ends up presenting alternate forms of embodiment as better replacements for that body, then we cannot understand the ideal substitutes without understanding the unsatisfactory starting-point. I will examine the given body from two different perspectives: as a physical, biological and mortal entity, and as a social construct. I will argue that like other religious traditions in India and beyond, Buddhism finds the given body, in both these respects, radically inadequate, and that much of the basic religious problematic that drives the Buddhist salvific quest can be articulated in terms of this inadequacy of the body. Much of Buddhist religious discourse and practice, therefore, can also be understood as so many modes of redress to these corporeally epitomised problems. Ultimately, the fabulous modes of glorious ideal embodiment that are proposed later in the

Buddhist tradition are, in one dimension of their complexity, a way of articulating a solution to these problems in the corporeal mode, in answer to the deeply corporeal tone of our experiential encounter with those problems in the first place.

In the second section of this chapter, we will examine a mode of discourse in the Pāli canon that characterises the *summum bonum* as a conquest over or exemption from death ("undying", *amṛta/amata*). This discourse is usually underemphasised in secondary scholarship on Buddhism (perhaps because rationalist, "Protestant" interpretative). It is nonetheless very widespread in the Pāli materials, and deeply intertwined with a whole range of other important ideas. There are two reasons it is important for us to examine this neglected discourse.

First, if the given body is an epitome of the large problem of suffering to which Buddhism proposes its solutions, then the inadequate and dolorous nature of the body is in turn epitomised by the problem of death. Indeed, the widespread discourse about undying as a characterisation of the religious good is itself further evidence for the validity of this assertion, and the discourse of undying is frequently articulated in terms that make it clear that "death" is often deployed as a token or synecdoche of the entire problem of suffering and *saṃsāra* in all its awful ramifications.

Second, as we shall see in Chapter 4, the later Buddhist tradition was eventually to come around to speaking overtly of the Buddha as immortal, and speaking of that immortality in specifically corporeal terms. Unless we correct the impression that there is no precedent for talk of undying in the earlier tradition, it might be easy to make the mistake of thinking that this later discourse about the Buddha's embodied immortality was an aberration, a deviation from the gold standard of the "original" tradition, and perhaps, indeed, another case in point

where the Mahāyāna imposes alien superstitious religiosity on an initially rationalist system. I will argue, however, that the extensive discourse of undying in the early Pāli materials forces us to recognise that however novel may have been the specific forms in which the ideal of immorality was expressed in those later materials, the fundamental ideal of undying was present from the very inception of the tradition. This old discourse of undying must have presented any new ideas about extreme longevity or mortality with very fertile native soil upon which to flourish.

In the third section of this chapter, we will turn to the first place in which we see any doctrine of extraordinary embodiment in the Buddhist tradition – the doctrine of a "body made of mind" (*manomayakāya*). As we shall see, this idea is testified as early as anything we know in the textual record. I will argue that the actual doctrines of *manomayakāya* in the Pāli canon are more complex than has hitherto been recognised. Indeed, that a large part of the reason that this concept has been oversimplified is that it has fairly regularly been regarded as of interest solely as a supposed precedent for later doctrines of ideal Buddha bodies, and particularly, for the way it supposedly anticipates aspects of *trikāya* doctrine. In fact, however, it is primarily a notion linked to presuppositions about the linked domains of Buddhist cosmology and meditative attainments. As such, it is neither a unique property of the Buddha, nor is it even considered the special property of Buddhist paragons or Buddhist ideas and practices. It is rather an attainment open to a broad range of Buddhist and non-Buddhist adepts. It moreover falls short of the status that I routinely describe in this dissertation as "Buddhist ideal embodiments", in the double sense that it is, first, not held to be unique to Buddhism, and second, it is not actually linked with the ultimate goal of salvific endeavour, but rather, is regarded at best as an elevated stage on the path to that further goal.

I will also argue in this chapter that *manomayakāya* is the best, and indeed the only, candidate we find in these earliest materials for a doctrine of any kind of extraordinary embodiment. Given that even *manomayakāya* falls short of my criteria for an "ideal Buddhist" embodiment, therefore, this chapter will conclude, perhaps somewhat surprisingly for a major building-block in a study whose focus is squarely on such ideal embodiments, that the notion of embodiment is strikingly *absent* from the earliest observable phase of the Pāli materials. Instead, it seems, the usual tendency in these early materials is to imagine the *summum bonum,* insofar as it is positively or actively imagined or imaginable at all, in terms of utter disembodiment. This tendency, it seems to me, is in keeping with a broader tendency in the early materials to overwhelmingly emphasis the ineffabilist mode in preaching or pointing to the soteriological ideal.[109] Such a strategy, however, despite its great novelty, rigour and suggestive power, seems not to have been without keenly felt problems of its own in the long term. Indeed, problems stemming from this strategy may in the end have been one of the ironic engines that powered the long-term development of doctrines about ideal embodiments in later Buddhist history.

[109] See n. 39 for the definition of "ineffabilism" here, and n. 40-42 for other definitional considerations that form its context.

Chapter 2.1 The ordinary, given body in the Pāli canon

"I live in company with a body, a silent companion, exacting and eternal.
He it is who notes that individuality which is the seal of the weakness of
our race. My soul has wings, but the brutal jailer is strict."
--- Eugène Delacroix (1798–1863)[110]

"The body is a wound, Sakyamuni said."
--- James K. Baxter (1926-1972)[111]

First, we turn to the discussion of the ordinary, given body in the early Pāli-canonical period. What is the nature of the body we come into the world with, or with which the world ordinarily endows us? What is wrong with it, that we need to embark on a religious quest for salvation at all? How is the body implicated in the problem of suffering and the round of *saṃsāra*?

The ordinary, given body can be usefully treated, I believe, under two main heads: the physical body, and the social body. I will discuss each of these in turn.

2.1.1 The ordinary given physical body

The Foucauldian theorist Alphonso Lingis attempts to account for the peculiar role the body plays, as a site upon which subjects suffer the impositions of "power", by saying that the body is

> " . . . a sensitive substance, a substance that produces pain and pleasures in itself . . . . Its substance is relieved and wounded, is gratified and excites pleasure, troubles and torments. It is as a painful and voluptuous substance that its muscular and nervous circuitry attracts forces and get [*sic*] coded with blazons, signs, functional identities . . ."[112]

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[110] Eugène Delacroix, June 4, 1824, *The Journal of Eugène Delacroix*, trans. Walter Pach (New York: Crown, 1948).

[111] James K. Baxter, "Song for Sakyamuni", (1971), in J. E. Weir, ed., *Collected Poems* (Wellington: Oxford University Press, 1979/1981), 500.

[112] Lingis, 286-287.

With some adjustment for the modern scientistic metaphor, this could serve very well as a forceful, if quirky, restatement of the First Noble Truth: All is suffering. Note that Lingis speaks both of "gratification and pleasure" as well as of "trouble and torment". Even our pleasures, we should recall, are understood in the Buddhist view to be just another source of trouble, in a kind of two-phase process of entrapment and torment. First, pleasure is the bait that lures us to our own destruction: it is in the constant quest for ever-elusive pleasures that we continually throw ourselves back onto the barbed hook of unreliable, transient experience. Pleasure, that is to say, is the engine that drives craving and attachment. Second, however, we suffer when our favoured relation to the objects of desire changes, as all conditioned relations between conditioned things are apt to do, and we are sundered from them. Like the booby-trapped fruits that explode into flame in the mouths of luckless *pretas*, our pleasures consistently turn nasty, and come back to bite us savagely on the bum.

Lingis's formulation, then, reminds us vividly that the body is the susceptible substance of the gamut of experience that Buddhism characterises as *duḥkha.* From the common ground of this susceptible physical flesh, however, Buddhism and Foucauldian theory rapidly part company.[113] Indeed, I chose to begin this section with Lingis in part as a mild spoof on the ironically pious habits of "theoretically informed" scholars, who invoke Big Names from the pantheon of modern, often "continental" thought like mediaeval scholastics (Buddhist as much as Christian) citing chapter and verse; as often as not, this move is made in the name of some ostensibly

[113] In a sense, this claim can only be fully demonstrated on the basis of all the ideas considered in this dissertation, and perhaps more besides. I intend to consider in future work the way Buddhist ideas might suggest we can moderate or complement the claims of Foucauldian theory. To anticipate, think of the remaining Noble Truths – or, indeed, the very notion that there *is* such a thing as accessible "truth". Think also of the ideal embodiments it is our business here to study, and the fact that in Buddhism the problem is, as much as embodiment *per se,* ignorance, that is, a particular spiritual or cognitive *relation* to the facts of our embodied experience. What is there in Foucault and his followers that remotely corresponds to any of this? Conversely, what is there in Buddhism that is even vaguely interested in the problem of "power", as Foucault defines it?

subversive project, and yet it seems too often to serve merely to place their work within the pale of some larger orienting framework of already known truths. It is not my intention, however, to view our Buddhist materials through a Foucauldian lens – far from it; I fear that if we did so, most of what is there to be seen would fall outside the frame entirely. It is rather my hope that the invocation of Lingis at the outset of our examination of Buddhist bodies will serve as a tongue-in-cheek way of preparing the ground for my eventual consideration of the ways Buddhist doctrine of embodiment requires us to rethink and supplement Foucauldian approaches to the body.

Part of the irony, indeed, of invoking Foucauldian discourse at the outset of an examination of the *physical, given* body lies in the fact that Lingis's attention here to the body as a physical substance is such a rare moment, an atypical exception to the usual pattern of attention in the work inspired by Foucault that so dominates contemporary consideration of the body in the humanities and social sciences. Far more typical of the Foucauldian mode, rather, is an arguably excessive obsession with what Mary Douglas would call (to anticipate the argument below) the "social" body, to the extent that the physical body often seems almost entirely invisible in such scholarship, and readers might well find themselves periodically wondering whether Foucault consistently even recognises that there is such a thing at all. Even where the physical body does make a walk-on appearance in such discourse, it is usually as we see it here in Lingis: fleeting consideration will be given to certain rudimentary features of its makeup, and the vicissitudes that our embodiment in such a vessel exposes us to, but only insofar as is necessary to set the scene for the real action, whose plot revolves entirely around the manifold social constructions that can be erected upon this virgin ground.

Buddhism, by contrast, and especially early Buddhism, insists upon keeping the gut-wrenching dangers of the frail flesh firmly in view, in a manner, indeed, that modern existential complacency might find somewhat psychopathological, though it is not atypical of other pre-modern religious traditions as well. The danger for early Buddhism, it seems, is in fact precisely that we too easily grow complacent in the face of a crisis represented by our embodiment, a crisis that is at once unshakably chronic and fiercely acute; from a Buddhist perspective, the fleeting Foucauldian recognition of the base conditions of this crisis, only to turn immediately to a supposedly almost infinite malleability of its symbolic construction, would surely represent a most perilous kind of false consciousness.

For early Buddhism, the ordinary given physical body is fundamentally and ineluctably problematic, prior to and after all social construction. It is understood to be conditioned (*saṃskṛta*), to come into being and pass out of it, and therefore, like all existents so characterised, to be impermanent, impure, and characterised by suffering. Among all the things of the conditioned world, however (which for Buddhism, to a first approximation, means absolutely everything), the body of each of us occupies, for that person, a privileged position, since it is the only conditioned thing that in some sense *is* us (taking as read the necessary caveats about our actual identity or otherwise with our body). If *saṃsāra* is a problem, then, the worst part of the problem, for each individual, is the body of that individual. In our usual benighted state, however, in part precisely because of the profound horror of the facts, we sentient beings are afflicted (in the Buddhist perspective) by an almost insuperable tendency to ignore – in the double sense of deliberately disregarding, and (more etymologically) to simply not know about – this fundamental fact of existence, like the Foucauldian theorists who spill so much ink on the subject of the body and so rarely mention the fact that it is a physical substance doomed to suffer pain and die. For Buddhism, then, a large part of the salvific task

can be encapsulated in, and indeed even achieved by, the effort to wrench our attention squarely back onto the nasty facts of given physical embodiment.

It seems to me that these claims about the status of the physical body in Buddhism cannot be very controversial, and I do not think, in pointing out these aspects of Buddhism, that I am making any stunning new observations. What is novel in my argument, rather, is the fact that I am incorporating the consideration of this given physical body into the study of ideal Buddhist bodies, and the argumentative yield of that move will only become fully apparent later in this dissertation, when we have the ideal embodiments on the table alongside ordinary given embodiments and can consider them in their relation to one another. For the remainder of this section, therefore, I will confine myself to citing a few representative aspects of early Buddhist ideas in which the problematic nature of the given body is instantiated, to show that Buddhism most typically abominates the flesh, or at least suspects it deeply.

2.1.1.1 The body as archetypal site and occasion of suffering (*duḥkha*)

For early Buddhism as much as anyone, the existential problem is in large part "the thousand natural shocks/ That *flesh* is heir to".[114] Suffering (*duḥkha*) is depicted as first and foremost an embodied experience, where the example of suffering *par excellence* is physical pain. This point can be illustrated vividly and readily from the *Mahādukkhakkhandha-sutta* (MN 13, the "Greater Discourse on the Mass of Suffering"), where the body features doubly, both as a large part of the cause that leads us into suffering in the first place, and also, in length and gruesome detail, as the substance that undergoes the passions of suffering as a result.

[114] *Hamlet,* 3.1.70-71.

The text is structured around a threefold analysis of sensual pleasures in terms of the gratification they offer, their danger, and the way that it is possible to escape from them. The first category is relatively simple, and consists of objects of desire enjoyed through all the five senses (expounded in typical exhaustive permutation of formulae). The five senses and their objects are thus "the five cords of sensual pleasure", by which, presumably, we are kept in bondage.[115]

When the text turns to describing the dangers into which we are lured by these siren objects of pleasure, it waxes eloquent with a long litany of ever-worse sufferings, ranging from quotidian discomforts to a kaleidoscope of agonising tortures. It speaks of the discomforts we have to endure in the pursuit of our worldly occupations, such as heat, cold, gadflies, mosquitoes, wind, sun, "creeping things", and "death by hunger and thirst";[116] of work undertaken in vain and the frustration and disappointment that ensues;[117] worry about protecting property already won, and distress when it is lost;[118] of quarrels occasioned over objects of sensual pleasure, in which people "attack each other with fists, clods, sticks, or knives, whereby they incur death or deadly suffering";[119] of battle and war, in which men "are wounded by arrows and spears, and their heads are cut off by swords, whereby they incur death or deadly suffering";[120] in like vein, of having to attack "slippery bastions", where men are "wounded by arrows and spears and splashed with boiling liquids and crushed under heavy weights, and their heads are cut off by

[115] Ñāṇamoli 180.

[116] Ñāṇamoli 180.

[117] Ñāṇamoli 180-181.

[118] Ñāṇamoli 181.

[119] Ñāṇamoli 181.

[120] Ñāṇamoli 181.

swords".[121] The text also describes men, lured by the promise of sensual pleasure to commit crimes, who are caught, whereon

> " . . . kings have them flogged with whips, beaten with canes, beaten with clubs; they have their hands cut off, their feet cut off, their hands and feet cut off; their ears cut off, their noses cut off, their ears and noses cut off; they have them subjected to the 'porridge pot', to the 'polished-shell-shave', to the 'Rāhu's mouth', to the 'fiery wreath', to the 'flaming hand', to the 'blades of grass', to the 'bark dress', to the 'antelope', to the 'meat hooks', to the 'coins', to the 'lye pickling', to the 'pivoting pin', to the 'rolled-up palliase'; and they have them splashed with boiling oil, and they have them thrown to be devoured by dogs, and they have them impaled alive on stakes, and they have their heads cut off with swords . . ."

whereby the hapless wretches predictably "incur death or deadly suffering".[122] As if that wasn't enough, the text puts the icing on the cake by mentioning that people who commit misdeeds of body, speech and mind go after their death to various hells etc.[123]

Clearly, in texts like this,[124] suffering is envisaged as a highly, if not primarily, corporeal matter, in vivid and concrete detail enough to delight even the minstrel of "brave, brave Sir Robin".[125]

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[121] Ñāṇamoli 181-182.

[122] Ñāṇamoli 182. Ñāṇamoli refers us to the *Majjhima-nikāya-aṭṭhakathā* for "a graphic description of each of these forms of torture", 1199 n. 201; see also the fns. to AN 2.1.1, "Punishments", Woodward and Rhys Davids I, 42-43.

[123] Ñāṇamoli 182.

[124] At MN 129, *Bālapaṇḍita-sutta,* knowledge that they could be caught and subjected to this same list of tortures is given as one of the three kinds of suffering experienced by fools who commit misdeeds of body, speech, and mind (the other two being that he is tormented by trepidation that he will incur disapproval, and by a guilty conscience at his past misdeeds); he is then born in bad destinies for his misdeeds. The text then describes the torments of hell, which are also *bodily* torments (being struck hundreds of times by spears, having red-hot iron stakes driven through the various parts of the body, being pared down with axes and adzes, being driven across burning ground in a chariot, being plunged into a red-hot metal cauldron etc.); Ñāṇamoli 1016-1019. At MN 130, the *Devadūta-sutta,* a miscreant is reborn in Yama's hell, and Yama questions him on the five "divine messengers" (*devadūta*), i.e. signs that are given to us ordinary mortals in the world to show that it is a defile of woe and that we must be vigilant about our behaviour lest we suffer in future worlds. These other four messengers are respectively birth, old age, sickness, and death, and in this company we find the torture of apprehended criminals – the same list of tortures is repeated; this comes close to giving these tortures a guest-star status alongside the usual trio of *jāti-jarā-maraṇa,* the archetypal synecdoche for suffering as a whole. The text then describes the miscreant being subjected serially to the same list of gruesome, intensely corporeal torments just mentioned from MN 129, and then some, including a "Great Hell", which is basically a huge oven; a "Hell of Excrement"; a "Hell of Embers", a hell of thorn trees etc.; Ñāṇamoli 1027-

The fact of our ordinary physical embodiment is thus central to the problematic of suffering, which Buddhism takes as its whole point of departure.

2.1.1.2 "Birth, sickness, old age and death" as the epitome of suffering (*duḥkha*)

In a very widespread trope, the bodily states of birth, old age, sickness and death are, in this full combination or various permutations, often cited as the epitome of suffering (*duḥkha*). This pattern is so widespread that I cannot hope to document it exhaustively here, and I will merely give some representative examples.

The equivalence between these bodily sufferings and suffering in general, first, is drawn in some less formulaic contexts, where the equivalence is perhaps assumed, or perhaps has not yet been incorporated into formal *mātṛkā*-style rubrics. For example, in *Therīgāthā*, "Sumedhā":

> "When the unageing exists, what do you want with sensual pleasures, in which are old age and death? All births everywhere are bound up with death and sickness.
>
> "This is unageing, this is undying, this is the unageing, undying state;[126] without grieving, without enmity, unobstructed, without fear, without burning.
>
> "This undying has been attained by many, and this is to be obtained even today (by one) who rightly applies himself; but it cannot (be attained) by one who does not strive."[127]

1035. The same two sets of torments are described in AN 2.1.1, Woodward and Rhys Davids I, 42-43. They are also among a list of four fears in AN 4.12.121, the others of which are fear of self-reproach, fear of the reproach of others, and fear of future rebirth in a bad destiny (the latter, however, merely mentioned without the gory detail of the above texts); Woodward and Rhys Davids II, 125-126.

[125] See *Monty Python and the Holy Grail,* dir. Terry Gilliam and Terry Jones (20th Century Fox/Columbia Pictures, 1975): "Bravely bold Sir Robin rode forth from Camelot./ He was not afraid to die, O brave Sir Robin!/ He was not at all afraid to be killed in nasty ways,/ Brave, brave, brave, brave Sir Robin! / He was not in the least bit scared to be mashed into a pulp,/ Or to have his eyes gouged out, and his elbows broken;/ To have his kneecaps split, and his body burned away;/ And his limbs all hacked and mangled, brave Sir Robin! / His head smashed in and his heart cut out/ And his liver removed and his bowels unplugged/ And his nostrils raped and his bottom burned off/ And his pen-- . . ."

[126] Note the connections with the discourse of "undying", which we will examine in more detail below, p. 177 ff.

[127] ThiG 511-513, Norman II, 50: *ajaramhi vijjamāne kiṃ tava kāmehi yesu/ jarāmaraṇavyādhagahitā sabbā sabbattha jātiyo./ idamajaramidamamaraṃ idamajarāmarapadamasokaṃ,/ asapattamasambādhaṃ*

Similarly, in DN 14 *Mahâpadāna-sutta,* the Bodhisattva Vipassī, meditating on suffering as a beginning to his own attainment of liberation, is depicted as thinking, "This world, alas, is in a sorry state: there is birth and decay, there is death and falling into other states and being reborn (*jāyati ca jīyati mīyati ca cavati ca upapajjati ca*). And no one knows any way of escape from this suffering, this ageing and death (*jarāmaraṇa*).[128]

More frequently, however, we find this rubric or various permutations of its component members incorporated in various doctrinal rubrics. For example, in one of the classic formulations of the Four Noble Truths, the first truth, that of suffering (*duḥkhasatya*) is expressed thus: "What is suffering? . . . . Birth is suffering, ageing is suffering, sickness is suffering, death is suffering; sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair are suffering; not to obtain what one wants is suffering; in short, the five aggregates affected by clinging are suffering. This is called suffering."[129]

In one of the *loci classici* for this formula, MN 9 the *Sammādiṭṭhi-sutta* ("The Discourse on Right View"), the immediately following section of the text further expounds on ageing and death *jarāmaraṇa*, which is expounded (as per the formula for this whole *sutta*) as "another way in which a noble disciple is one of right view" etc.: "When, friends, a noble disciple understands ageing and death, the origin [etc., according to the rubric of all four of the Four Noble Truths,

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akhalitamabhayaṃ nirupatāpaṃ./ adhagatamidaṃ bahūhi amatamajjāpi ca labhanīyamidaṃ,/ yo yoniso payuñjati na ca sakkā aghaṭamānena.

[128] Walshe 211.

[129] MN 9 *Sammādiṭṭhi-sutta,* Ñāṇamoli 48-49: *jātipi dukkhā, jarāpi dukkhā, vyādhipi dukkho, maraṇampi dukkhaṃ, sokaparidevadukkhadomanassupāyāsāpi dukkhā, yampicchaṃ na labhati tampi dukkhaṃ, saṅkhittena pañcupādānakkhandhā dukkhā. idaṃ vuccatāvuso dukkhaṃ.* Also MN 28, *Mahāhatthipadopama-sutta,* Ñāṇamoli 278; MN 141 *Saccavibhanga-sutta,* Ñāṇamoli 1098; SN 56.11 the *Dhammacakkapavattana-sutta* (the "First Sermon", which is indicative of its centrality to the tradition if not its historical antiquity), Bodhi 1844; AN 6.6.63, Woodward and Hare III, 294.

so that *jātimaraṇa* is being made to stand in by synecdoche for all suffering] . . . . in that way he is one of right view." The text proceeds to go into further grim detail on ageing and death, in a manner typical of these texts that elsewhere seems clearly calculated to bring the nasty facts firmly in view and force their recognition upon the reluctant consciousness:

> "What is ageing and death? . . . . The ageing of beings in the various orders of beings, their old age, brokenness of teeth, greyness of hair, wrinkling of skin, decline of life, weakness of faculties – this is called ageing. The passing of beings out of the various orders of beings, their passing away, dissolution, disappearance, dying, completion of time, dissolution of the aggregates, laying down of the body – this is called death."[130]

The text then goes on to ring the same changes on birth, which the structure of the text also makes it clear can stand in for the whole order of suffering.[131]

A common subset of these four bodily epitomes of suffering is the pair of "ageing and death". Like the full set, sometimes this pair is found as a fairly straightforward equivalent for suffering, outside the context of formalised rubrics – for example, in the verses of the *yakkhī* Punabbasu's mother, SN 10.7, "In this world steeped in suffering/ Fettered by age and death,/ . . ." (*loke dukkhaparetasmiṃ jarāmaraṇasaṃyute*),[132] or in the verses of Bhūta in *Theragāthā*, where a clever man (*paṇḍita*) is said to know that "old age and death, to which ignorant individuals are attached, are painful".[133]

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[130] Ñāṇamoli 135-136.

[131] For another instance of all four of these afflictions, along with the list of tortures studied above, as the five "divine messengers", see the reference to MN 130, n. 124 above.

[132] Bodhi 310.

[133] ThaG 518, Norman I, 53: *yadā dukkhaṃ jarāmaraṇanti paṇḍito/ aviddasū vattha sitā puthujjanā.*

Much more frequently, however, this pair of concepts is found as part of the classic twelvefold *nidāna* scheme of dependent origination (*pratītyasamutpāda*).[134] It is also found in what appears to be abbreviated (or perhaps prototypical) forms of (part of) the *nidāna* formula, as in MN 1 *Mūlapariyāya-sutta*: "Delight is the root of suffering . . . with being [as condition] there is birth . . . for whatever has come to be there is ageing and death".[135]

In another variant, we find the triad of "birth, ageing and death" (*jātijarāmaraṇa*), also as an epitome of the "mass of suffering" etc. For example, at SN 12.39 it features as part of what is otherwise roughly the same characterisation of suffering seen from MN 9 etc. just above: "birth, aging-and-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain displeasure and despair" (*jātijarāmaraṇaṃ sokaparidevadukkha*).[136]

These examples could be multiplied almost *ad infinitum,* but hopefully they will serve to make the basic point that birth, sickness, old age and death, or some subset thereof, are very regularly adduced as an epitome of the suffering (*duḥkha*) that Buddhism takes as the motivating problematic for its whole religious project of liberation. Indeed, as is well-known, in later Buddhist narrative literature one such subset, old age, sickness and death, was

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[134] See e.g. DN 15 the *Mahānidāna-sutta*, Walshe 223 ff.; MN 38 *Mahātaṇhasankhaya-sutta,* Ñāṇamoli 354, 356, etc.; MN 115, *Bahudhātuka-sutta,* Ñāṇamoli 927; SN 12.1, Bodhi 533, and dozens of times throughout the *Nidāna-saṃyutta.*

[135] Ñāṇamoli 89. See also MN 75, *Māgandiya-sutta,* Ñāṇamoli 616.

[136] Bodhi 577. So too SN 12.40, Bodhi 577. On the whole, however, this triad is surprisingly rare in the first three *nikāyas*. In DN 15, *Mahānidāna-sutta,* birth, ageing, death and suffering (*jātijarāmaraṇaṃdukkha*) are listed together as the ultimate problem brought about by the fact that consciousness finds a resting place in mind-and-body (*nāmarūpa*); Walshe 226. As at MN 138, *Uddesavibhanga-sutta,* the idea that there will be no arising of "birth, ageing, death and suffering" (*jātijarāmaraṇadukkhasamudayasambhavo na hoti*) is sometimes used as a shorthand for liberation from *saṃsāra*; Ñāṇamoli 1074 and infra. At SN 12.64, "If There Is Lust", craving etc. for edible food is said to be dangerous because it leads (through the *nidāna* concatenation of consciousness, name-and-form etc.) to "future birth, aging and death" (*āyatiṃ jātijarāmaraṇaṃ*), which is said to be always accompanied by "sorrow, anguish and despair" (*sasokaṃ sadaraṃ saupāyāsa*); Bodhi 600. In SN 48.49, "Piṇḍola", the faculties of mindfulness, concentration and wisdom are said to lead to the destruction (*khaya*) of birth, age and death (*jātijarāmaraṇa*).

immortalised as three of the "four sights" that the Buddha is said to have seen when he sneaked out of the palace as a young man and was exposed to the true horrors of worldly existence, thus catalysing his own religious quest.[137]

It scarcely needs underlining that birth, sickness, old age and death are primarily bodily matters. In this respect, also, then, it seems that it is no exaggeration to say that the given physical body is central to the problem of suffering for Buddhism.

2.1.1.3 The mistaken belief that one is/has a self (*sakkāya*[-*diṭṭhi*])

"The ego is first and foremost a body-ego."
--- Sigmund Freud[138]

Next we will consider another widespread set of ideas in the Pāli canon which also indicates that ordinary embodiment is central to the existential/religious problematic for Buddhism, and also to measures taken to solve that problem: various considerations surrounding the doctrine of *sakkāya* and *sakkāyadiṭṭhi* (Skt. *satkāya, satkāyadṛṣṭi*).[139] This term, as we will see from detailed

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[137] See e.g. Aśvaghoṣa's *Buddhacarita,* Canto 3, Johnston 32-43; the fourth sight is of course a *śrāmaṇera*, Johnston 64-65. A presumably early (in the sense that the entire Pāli canon is "early") version of this idea is of course found in DN 14, the *Mahâpadāna-sutta,* Walshe 207-210.

[138] Freud, Sigmund, "The Ego and the Id", Joan Riviere, trans. (Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psychoanalysis, 1927), 26; cited in Sacks, "The Disembodied Lady", 52.

[139] I was able to find very little in the secondary literature that studied the concept of *sakkāya*(-*diṭṭhi*) in the early sources, apart of course from the dictionary entries cited below. Steve Collins briefly discusses the concept, and some of the passages studied below, in the context of the larger picture of *anattā* doctrine in early Buddhism; see esp. *Selfless Persons,* 93-94, 117-118, 133. Those secondary studies in Japanese that I was able to locate from a search on the INBUDS database uniformly focus on the place of the doctrine in later systems, as e.g. Nāgārjuna, Sarvâstivāda, Vātsīputrīya, and Vijñaptimātra. Similarly, Wayman's article "Twenty Reifying Views" (375-376) lists some Pāli canonical references, many of them from portions of the canon usually thought be late and not considered here, but then goes on to Nāgārjuna, Candrakīrti, the *Mahāvyutpatti,* and other similarly late sources. Rahder's article in *Mélanges chinois et bouddhiques* (for which see Wayman, n. 1) is based upon the *Vibhāṣā.* For a conspectus of later scholastic opinions (bluntly labelled "fantasies" by Edgerton!; Edgerton, s.v. *satkāya*) on the meaning of *satkāya,* see la Vallée Poussin's *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* IV, 15-17, fn. to Bh to 5.7. Lambert Schmithausen also considers the place of the concept in Yogācāra literature, alongside *asmimāna,* in his article "Gaken

study of canonical references below, means roughly "the mistaken view that a self exists in some sense in, of, or as one or more of the five *skandhas*".

The word *sakkāya* (Skt. *satkāya*) is variously translated, and its precise interpretation poses certain problems. It is derived from *sat+kāya, sat* being the present participle (*sant*) of the verbal root /*as* "to be, to exist", and *kāya,* meaning, of course, "body".[140] It should be immediately noted, in the context of the present study of doctrines of embodiment, in which the term *kāya* plays such a prominent role, that the word here cannot be interpreted as straightforwardly referring to the physical body; most usually, rather, the contexts in which the term is used makes it clear that it covers a range roughly coterminous with the whole person as mapped in *skandha* (*khandha,* aggregate) theory. It is not so easy to determine what *kāya does* mean here, however. In fact, some translators (as can be seen from numerous citations below) choose to elide the literal meaning "body" of the term altogether. Others try to dance around the disjunction between this literal meaning and the conceptual work the term usually does by resorting to the abstract meaning the word *kāya* sometimes carries of "a corpus, a collective, a group" (like English "a body of texts), a strategy which is in some degree warranted by the fact that Buddhist texts usually associate the term with *skandha* ("aggregate") analysis of the putative person. Neither strategy is entirely satisfactory for our purposes here. Obviously, in the context of a study of ideas about the body, it will not do to ignore such an important use of the word *kāya*. On the other hand, to argue that the word is being used primarily in its sense of "collectivity" or "group", and so attempt to harmonise the word with Buddhist orthodoxy, ignores the very salient fact that *sakkāya* is consistently used to label an *erroneous* (heterodox)

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ni kansuru jakkan no kōsatsu: sakayaken, gaman, osen'i". Most of the study presented here, therefore, I had to undertake from scratch.

[140] See PTS *Dictionary,* s.v. *sakkāya*; Edgerton s.v. *satkāya*.

view; it therefore does not help us at all in determining the meaning that *kāya* carries, in this context, to read into it some correct Buddhist understanding!

There are further difficulties interpreting the element *sat-* as it enters into the term. The (Skt.) verbal root */as* (Pāli *aṭṭhi,* Skt. *asti),* from which *sat* is derived, means "to be" in roughly the same broad range of senses found with the English verb, including both existential and copulative senses.[141] Almost all interpretations of *sakkāya* tend to see *sat* as deriving from the existential sense of the verb, and thus meaning "existent", "existing" etc. This tendency can be seen, for instance, in the definition of *sakkāya* given by the Pāli Text Society *Dictionary* editors: "the body in being, the existing body or group".[142] In a similar vein, one of the most common Chinese translations of the term is *youshen* (有身, *youshenjian* 有身見 for ~*dṛṣṭi*), where *you* is a verb of existence that is never used copulatively, yielding a term that clearly reads, literally, "the view that the body *exists*". However, this widespread reading virtually forces us to read the *kāya* in *sakkāya/satkāya* in the very attenuated sense already noted above. If we regard *sat* as meaning "existent", it makes little sense to read *kāya* literally as "body", since that yields the almost nonsensical "belief that the body really exists", which has very little to do with the sense in which the term is deployed in any of the important canonical contexts. Since the term as a whole clearly, from context, means a belief in a self or "personality", we are left with our only choice being to regard *kāya* as somehow meaning "self" or "personality". As we have seen, one strategy that (more or less) allows us to do this is to read *kāya* as meaning "collective" and as referring to the *skandhas,* which are, after all, a collectivity that Buddhism substitutes where alternate systems see a self. This reading, however, seems to put the cart before the horse, in

[141] See Monier Williams, s.v. *as.*

[142] Edgerton more aptly translates *satkāyadṛṣṭi* "the heretical belief in a real personality", which gives a much better sense of the most usual meaning of *sakkāya/satkāya* in actual usage; the same problems persist, however, relating this to the semantic content of the terms comprising the compound.

that it reads the Buddhist corrective back into the very term we are supposed to be correcting (and thus surely leaves us wondering why there was a need for so much preaching to the choir in the first place!).

It seems most plausible to me, therefore, to see the problems that usually arise in the interpretation of *kāya* and *sat-* as linked, and to seek their solution in a reading of both that is consistent and also makes sense of the relation between the semantics of the words and the doctrinal work the compound does in its canonical usages. The key to such a reading, I believe, is to be found in refusing the usual reading of *sat* in terms of the existential meaning of */as,* and to interpret it instead in the copulative sense. In other words, I propose that we read *satkāyadṛṣṭi* as meaning most primarily "the view that [one] *is* the body", that is, as referring to a benighted identification with the body as self. We know from canonical references to heterodox views[143] that it was at least the Buddhist perception that such views existed out there to be refuted, and we will also briefly visit below a passage from the *Taittarīya-upaniṣad* that likewise posits a "self made of food".[144] It would thus be consistent with the doctrinal landscape to suppose there was indeed a view roughly characterisable in these terms to refute. It is further consistent with almost every passage cited below to read the term in this way. Typically, as we shall see, the first possibility answering to the name of *sakkāyadiṭṭhi* that is represented in the Pāli texts is identification of self as, of, or in the physical body, and only thereafter do the texts consider the other *skandhas* (following the traditional order). It is plausible, therefore, that *kāya* is used as a stand-in for *rūpa* as a kind of synecdoche for the whole series, and that the term might be read "belief that one is the body, *etc.*" Second,

[143] See e.g. passages from the *Brahmajāla-sutta* (the first nihilist view) and the *Poṭṭhapāda-sutta* (Poṭṭhapāda's first posited self) cited below, p. 244, 242 respectively.

[144] See p. 225.

however, the five *skandha* schema is arguably pitched at the target of an unconsidered, common-sensical view of the (phenomenal) "body", and part of its punch may derive from the fact that it complicates the picture considerably by showing that there is more to our usual sense of our "body" than just the physical body itself, but that rather, we also include under that head experiential contents that are actually, when we scrutinise them, better understood as feeling, conception etc. It would, therefore, miss some of this polemical punch to the *skandha* analysis, to say that *kāya* here cannot mean body because of the range the term is shown to have by skandha analysis.

In sum, then, it seems to me that *sakkāyadiṭṭhi* is best understood as meaning the [mistaken] "belief that one *is* one's body". If this reading is valid, the use of the term once more shows that body is quite central to the overall religious problematic of early Buddhism. Below, I will argue that it is also possible, even setting aside this reading of the term itself, to argue that *sakkāya* doctrine shows the centrality of the body to the religious problematic in a more restricted sense; but for the moment, we can put such problems aside, and first see how the texts characterise this doctrinal category.

In places, *sakkāya*(*-diṭṭhi*) is simply mentioned, as if already a known concept, without further elaboration. To give only a few examples: at SN 1.21, the Blessed One says, "As if smitten by a sword,/ As if his head were on fire,/ A Bhikkhu should wander mindfully/ To abandon identity view (*sakkāyadiṭṭhi*)," using a formula that is also applied to the abandonment of "sensual lust".[145] Similarly, the *Therīgāthā* verses for "Sīsûpacālā" describe the round of *saṃsāra* as caused by the failure to transcend *sakkāya*: " . . . again and again, from existence to existence, exposed to individuality (*sakkāya*), not having passed beyond individuality, pursuing birth and

[145] Bodhi 100. The same verses are repeated at SN 2.16, Bodhi 149.

death".[146] The verses of "Subhā, the smith's daughter", likewise, describe the impetus to renounce thus: "Then I attained great non-delight in all sense pleasures; seeing fear in individuality (*sakkāya*), I longed only for renunciation (of the world)."[147] In the *Theragāthā* verses for "Kumārakkassapa", the Buddhas themselves are described as having gone through innumerable aeons of *sakkāya* before this, their last incarnation: "Through innumerable aeons they have attained individuality (*sakkāyâdhigata*). This is their last, this is their final body connected with the journeying-on of birth and death. There is now no renewed existence."[148] In another pithy passage at SN 35.238, *sakkāya* is opposed, as "the near shore", to Nibbāna, "the further shore".[149]

Far more frequently, however, *sakkāya*(-*diṭṭhi*) is embedded in more elaborate doctrinal expositions. These more extended expositions make the concept much clearer, and relate it to a number of other well-known concepts and rubrics.

One of the *loci classici* for the exposition of what is meant by *sakkāyadiṭṭhi* is found in MN 44, the *Cūḷavedalla-sutta.* Here, the bhikkhunī Dhammadinnā is shown first teaching the lay follower Visākha what is meant by the term *sakkāya* alone (translated "personality" by Ñāṇamoli). The format of the initial exposition follows the implicit structure of the Four Noble Truths, so that *sakkāya* is tacitly equated with suffering (*dukkha*) itself. The definition given of *sakkāya* is this:

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[146] *kālaṃ kālaṃ bhavābhavaṃ sakkāyasmiṃ purakkhatā, avitivattā sakkāyaṃ jātimaraṇasārino*; ThiG 199, Norman II, 22.

[147] *tatohaṃ sabbakāmesu bhusaṃ aratimajjhagaṃ,/ sakkāyasmiṃ bhayaṃ disvā nekkhammaññeva pīhaye;* ThiG 339, Norman II, 35.

[148] *asaṅkheyyemu kappesu sakkāyādhigatā ahū/ tesamayaṃ pacchiko carimo' yaṃ samussayo,/ jātimaraṇasaṃsāro natthi dāni punabbhavo'ti*; ThaG 202, Norman I, 25.

[149] Bodhi 1239: *orimaṃ tīraṃ sāsaṅkaṃ sappaṭibhayanti kho bhikkhave sakkāyassetaṃ adhivacanaṃ. pārimaṃ tīraṃ khemaṃ appaṭibhayanti kho bhikkhave, nibbānassetaṃ adhivacanaṃ.*

"The five aggregates affected by clinging (*upādānakkhandha*) are called *sakkāya* by the Blessed One; that is, the material form (*rūpa*) aggregate affected by clinging [. . . etc. for *vedanā, saññā, saṃkhāra* and *viññāṇa*]."[150] Dhammadinnā then teaches that the arising (*samudaya;* cf. the Second Noble Truth) of *sakkāya* is "craving, which brings renewal of being, is accompanied by delight and lust, and delights in this and that; that is, craving for sensual pleasures, craving for being, and craving for non-being."[151] The cessation (*nirodha;* the Third Noble Truth) is the "remainderless fading away and ceasing, the giving up, relinquishing, letting go, and rejecting"[152] of that same craving. The way leading to (*magga*; the Fourth Noble Truth) the cessation of *sakkāya* is the Noble Eightfold Path.[153]

Dhammadinnā then teaches Visākha the way that *sakkāyadiṭṭhi,* or the mistaken view that there is such a thing as *sakkāya,* comes into being, and the way to get rid of it. *Sakkāyadiṭṭhi* comes into being when "an untaught ordinary person . . . regards material form (*rūpa*) as self (*atta,* Skt. *ātman*), or self as possessed of material form, or material form as in self, or self as in material form [. . . etc. for *vedanā, saññā, saṃkhāra* and *viññāṇa*]."[154] The same mistaken view is got rid of when "a well-taught noble disciple . . . does not regard material form as self" and so forth.[155]

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[150] Ñāṇamoli 396.

[151] Ñāṇamoli 396: *taṇhā ponobbhavikā nandīrāgasahagatā tatratatrābhinandinī. seyyathidaṃ kāmataṇhā bhavataṇhā vibhavataṇhā.*

[152] Ñāṇamoli 397: *asesavirāganirodho cāgo paṭinissaggo mutti anālayo.*

[153] An abbreviated version of the exposition thus far is also found, under the head of just *sakkāya* rather than *sakkāyadiṭṭhi,* at SN 38.15, "Identity" (*sakkāya*).

[154] Ñāṇamoli 397-398: *rūpaṃ attato samanupassati, rūpavantaṃ vā attānaṃ, attani vā rūpaṃ, rūpasmiṃ vā attānaṃ,* etc. The construction of a self in each of these modes (X as self, self as possessed of X, X in self, self in X) for each of the five *khandhas* in turn are sometimes listed as the "twenty views"; Gethin, *Foundations* 148.

[155] Ñāṇamoli 398.

This exposition of the concepts of *sakkāya* and *sakkāyadiṭṭhi* already give us much of what we need to understand the concept. *Sakkāya* is not just the five *khandhas* alone, but those *khandhas* when they are the objects of *upādāna,* "attachment" or "clinging". In other words, *sakkāya* is a combination of the actual given constituents of experiential being and a mistaken cognitive and emotive relation to those constituents, a relation which grasps at them for more than what is actually there. The application of the framework of the Four Noble Truths to this concept shows further that *sakkāya* is considered central to the problematic of suffering (*dukkha*), which is a telling indication of its centrality to the Buddhist salvific project as a whole; it would not be inaccurate, perhaps, to say that *sakkāya* is a heuristic that provides us with a particular conceptual perspective on the nature of suffering, and is therefore identical with the ontological fact of suffering, though distinguished from the *concept* of suffering for purposes of exposition and praxis. Dhammadinnā's teaching on *sakkāyadiṭṭhi,* as opposed to *sakkāya* alone, further clarifies the precise nature of the "clinging" that makes the *khandhas* into the object of this suffering misconception: it is the perception that there is anything in, about, or of any of the *khandhas* that comprises a self (*atta*). In other words, *sakkāyadiṭṭhi* is a kind of *attavāda,* the theory that "there is a self" in some sense.

In a number of places, in fact, *sakkāyadiṭṭhi* is implicitly identified, by substitution in the same formulae or by association in the same close context, with other equivalent mistaken views. Especially important among these is the set of mistaken propositions "This is mine, this I am, this is my self" (*etaṃ mama, esohamasmi, eso me attā'ti* and variations on this basic theme). For example, at MN 109, *Mahāpuṇṇama-sutta,* exactly the same teaching as MN 44 is found,[156] but is further linked to the teaching that the way to regard the body so that "there is no I-making, mind-making, and underlying tendency to conceit" (*ahiṇkāramamiṇkāramānānusayā*) is to

[156] Ñāṇamoli 889.

regard each of the *khandhas* in turn "as it actually is with proper wisdom" (*yathābhūtaṃ sammappaññāya*). This, it turns out, entails thinking, "This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self" (*netaṃ mama, nesohamasmi, na meso atta*).[157] At MN 148, the *Chachakka-sutta, sakkāya* (alone, without *diṭṭhi*) is said to spring from this same set of threefold mistaken notions in relation to all the eighteen *dhātu* ("elements", i.e. the six senses, their objects, and their respective consciousnesses) in addition to assorted additional interlopers like "feeling" (*vedanā*) and "craving" (*taṇhā*). The cessation of *sakkāya* is then predictably expounded as proceeding from the application of the opposite propositions ("This is not mine" etc.) to the same series of analytic objects.[158]

Again, at SN 22.156, *sakkāyadiṭṭhi* is said simply to arise with relation to each of the five *khandhas* in turn "by clinging to form [and so on for the other *khandhas*], by adhering to form".[159] This *sutta* is actually one of seven successive small *suttas,* however, where this same formula is applied successively to "pleasure and pain aris[ing] internally", the idea that "This is mine, this I am, this is my self", the idea of a permanent self, the nihilist view, wrong view, and "view of self".[160] These various views, therefore, are seemingly different versions of the same basic underlying problem, that is, perhaps, different guises in which the fundamental belief in self can be manifested through various twists of psychology.

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[157] Ñāṇamoli 890. This same text is naturally enough repeated as part of the wholesale repetition of the same *sutta* at SN 22.82, Bodhi 923-928.

[158] Ñāṇamoli 1133-1134.

[159] Bodhi 979.

[160] SN 22.150-156, Bodhi 978-981.

This process of equating *sakkāyadiṭṭhi* with a raft of other, predominantly "*ātman*-ist" views, reaches its natural point of greatest logical extension at SN 41.3, "Isidatta". In this text, the MN 44 teaching regarding the coming to be and coming not to be of *sakkāyadiṭṭhi* is also repeated, but in this case, it is specifically identified as the root of all the "sixty-two speculative views mentioned in the Brahmajāla".[161]

This (hopefully) representative sampling of the detailed ways *sakkāya* or *sakkāyadiṭṭhi* are expounded gives a good sense of what is generally meant by the term. The same notions, however, are also often incorporated in larger rubrics, and the ways they sit in these broader doctrinal contexts further enhance our understanding of their meaning.

The most frequent of these larger rubrics is that of (various numbers of) "fetters" (*saṃyojana*), that is, bonds that tie the sentient being to ignorant suffering in *saṃsāra,* which therefore act as obstacles that also hold practitioners back from the attainment of liberation. The shortest such list is found when *sakkāyadiṭṭhi* is listed with doubt and overattachment to rite and ritual (*sīlabbata-parāmāsa*) as three "fetters" (*saṃyojanāni*), as e.g. in DN 33, the *Sangīti-sutta.*[162] Similarly, in MN 2, *Sabbāsava-sutta,* a bhikkhu who attends wisely to the four noble truths abandons the three fetters (as in DN 33 above).[163]

The ways the three fetters feature in other texts, however, seem to indicate that such rubrics were subject to a certain amount of creative expository manipulation, or that various lists

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[161] Bodhi 1316-1318. This *sutta* would seem not to belong to the earliest stratum of the canon, since it explicitly mentions DN 1 by name, and also presents the doctrine being taught by monks.

[162] Walshe 484.

[163] Ñāṇamoli 93.

circulated in parallel. Thus the three fetters are "to be given up" at AN 6.9.86, but under the head of a sixfold rubric that also includes the three poisons, which are each said to lead to evil destinies (*apāyagāmaniyaṃ rāgaṃ, apāyagamanīyaṃ dosaṃ, apāyagamanīyaṃ mohaṃ*).[164] Similarly, at AN 7.1.8, "conceit" (*māna*) is added to these six to make a list of seven things the giving up of which makes a person into a monk.[165]

Another common list is the five fetters, which incorporates the three fetters. These are taught e.g. in MN 64, *Mahāmālunkya-sutta,* where the Tathāgata speaks of a "tendency" to *sakkāyadiṭṭhi* and the other fetters even in a "young tender infant lying prone";[166] they are also taught, however, in numerous other texts.[167] At AN 3.10.92, "Aloofness", the five (lower) fetters are also listed, but in with the twist that the three fetters are given as a set, and then the final two in the fivefold rubric are listed almost like an afterthought.[168]

The five fetters are in turn sometimes referred to as the five "lower" (*orambhāgiya*) fetters, and combined with five "higher" (*uddhambhāgiya*) fetters to make ten.[169] For example, in the same DN 33, the *Sangīti-sutta,* just cited for the three fetters alone, the three fetters are also listed separately, with the addition of sensuality and ill-will, as the five lower fetters; five higher

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[164] Woodward and Hare III, 305. For a similar grouping see also AN 10.8.76, Woodward and Hare V, 101.

[165] Woodward and Hare IV, 98.

[166] Ñāṇamoli 537.

[167] E.g. SN 45.179, Bodhi 1565; repeated at 5.46.179, Bodhi 1623. Also AN 9.7.67, Woodward and Hare IV, 301; ThiG 165-166, "Guttā", Norman II, 19.

[168] Woodward and Hare I, 221. We also find the ten fetters in AN 10.2.12; Woodward and Hare V, 13. For further passages discussing the fetters see PTS *Dictionary* s.v. *saṇyojana.*

[169] Rupert Gethin discusses the place of the ten fetters in the structure of the Four Noble Truths in *Foundations,* 72-74.

fetters are also listed, namely craving for the *rūpadhātu* and *ārūpyadhātu* respectively, conceit, restlessness, and ignorance.[170]

The theme of identifying self as, in, as possessed of, etc. the *khandhas* is of course even more widespread in the *nikāyas* than those occasions when the problem it creates is specifically named as *sakkāya* or *sakkāyadiṭṭhi,* and indeed, is perhaps one of the most widespread and basic rubrics under which the aetiology of suffering and the way to end it are described. For example, in SN 22.1, "Nakulapitā", an old and sick householder is told that a person who regards the *khandhas* in this way (further specified by saying "He lives obsessed with the notions: 'I am form, form is mine' *ahaṃ rūpaṃ mama rūpa'nti*") will be "afflicted in [both] body and mind", whereas someone who rids themselves of these notions will be "afflicted in body but not afflicted in mind".[171] Similarly, at SN 22.47, "Ways of Regarding Things" (*Samanupassanā-sutta*), almost all of the formula that we saw used in the first half of the MN 44 teaching on the arising of *sakkāyadiṭṭhi* is repeated, but here it is used to explain the fact that all "ascetics and brahmans who regard [anything as] self in various ways all regard [as self] the five aggregates subject to clinging (*upādānakkhandha*)"; the text then goes on to describe (somewhat cryptically) the ways this leads to continued rebirth, and to contrast this with the state achieved by an "instructed noble disciple".[172] The same formula is used in MN 131, *Bhaddekaratta-sutta,* to describe being "vanquished in regard to presently arisen states" (*paccuppannesu dhammesu saṃhīrati*); the converse description of one who does not see self in *rūpa* etc. is used to describe someone "invincible in regard to presently arisen states" (*paccuppannesu dhammesu na saṃhīrati*).[173]

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[170] Walshe 295.

[171] Bodhi 853-856.

[172] Bodhi 885-886.

[173] Ñāṇamoli 1040-1041. The larger context of the teaching here is a warning against "reviving the past" or "building hopes on the future", and the implication is that there is some connection (if one not very

Likewise, at SN 22.7, "Agitation through Clinging" (*upādāparitassanā*), the eponymous "agitation through clinging" is said to result from regarding form as self, etc. the problem being that

> " . . . form . . . changes and alters. With the change and alteration of form, his consciousness becomes preoccupied with the change of form (*rūpavipariṇāmānuparivatti viññāṇaṃ hoti*). Agitation and a constellation of mental states born of preoccupation with the change of form remain obsessing (*pariyādā*) his mind. Because his mind is obsessed, he is frightened, distressed, and anxious, and through clinging he becomes agitated."

The same formula is then repeated for each of the other *khandhas,* and non-agitation through non-clinging is described in converse terms.[174]

Such examples of places where the texts describe suffering and related insalubrious states as arising from the basic error of seeing self in, of, or as the various *khandhas,* even without the overt identification of this problem as *sakkāya*(-*diṭṭhi*), could easily be multiplied further.[175] The very wide spread of this motif in the canon, and the fact that it is sometimes but not always labelled by the term *sakkāya*(-*diṭṭhi*), suggests that the latter term was perhaps coined specifically in order to label this view. Certainly, there is no usage of the term *sakkāya* or *~diṭṭhi* in any sense demonstrably different, nor in any sense that could be construed as representing an independent usage of a term that was later synthesised with the mistaken identification of self as, in or of the *khandhas*.

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clearly stated) between shedding the illusion of self and being able to "see with insight each presently arisen state" (*paccuppannañca yo dhammaṃ tattha tattha vipassatī*).

[174] Bodhi 865-866.

[175] See especially SN 22.42-47, Bodhi 882-886. Also SN 22.49, Bodhi 888; 3.22.81, Bodhi 922-923; 3.22.85, esp. Bodhi 934-936; 3.22.93, Bodhi 949; the delightful trope of the "dog on the leash", 3.22.99-100, Bodhi 957-959; 3.22.117, Bodhi 968-969; 4.44.7, Bodhi 1389, repeated in 4.44.8, Bodhi 1391; AN 4.20.200, Woodward and Hare II, 229; etc.

Turning to the question of the implications of the concept of *sakkāya*(*-diṭṭhi*) for the place of the body or embodiment in the religious problematic of early Buddhism, then, this means that the salient unit of doctrine is in a loose sense *anātman* doctrine itself, and that *sakkāya*(*-diṭṭhi*) doctrine is as central to early Buddhism as that very seminal doctrine. However, we must, of course, differentiate more precisely between passages that simply critique clinging to the *khandhas* as self in some sense, and passages that label that mistaken clinging by the term *sakkāya*(*-diṭṭhi*), since it could be argued that only with that term does the construction of self as/of/in the *khandhas* become an overtly corporeal problem. With this potential difficulty in mind, therefore, it seems to me that it is most accurate to say that *sakkāya*(*-diṭṭhi*) doctrine has the following two separable implications for the status of the body as such in early Pāli doctrine, and further brings to our attention a more general problem regarding the definition of "body" or "embodiment".

First, then, even apart from any labelling of the mistaken view of self as/of/in the *khandhas* by the term *sakkāyadiṭṭhi,* we should note that the first *khandha* is of course *rūpa,* and is usually interpreted as referring to the physical body (particularly as a repertoire of physical sense organs). It is clear from the numerous presentations of the problem of mistaken identification of self given above that the possibility is clearly envisaged that an "untutored" person will mistakenly identify self as, in, or of their body, etc. This means that the body is at least one central arena in which the problem of mistaken identification of self plays out, even if it is merely one such arena among five (including the other four *khandhas*). This is already enough to show that the body is, once more, quite central to the problematics to which early Buddhism proposes salvific solutions, and that entirely separate from any question of whether the term *kāya* (in *sakkāya*) is applied or not.

Second, however, we can here return to the question of why, in those passages that *do* speak of the problem of mistaken identification of self under the head of *sakkāya*, the term *kāya* is used. I argued above, in discussing the derivation of the compound *sakkāya,* that (a) it is indeed possible that *kāya* is used, referring to *rūpa,* as a synecdoche for the whole *khandha* complex, so that we could read *sakkāyadiṭṭhi* as meaning "the mistaken belief in self as, in or of the body *etc.*"; but (b) that this reading cannot really account for the use of the term *kāya,* nor for the fact that the term is used to label a heterodox, non-Buddhist, naive understanding of the state of affairs. The simplest reading of the term, I argued, taking into account the semantics of its constituent elements, is therefore "the (mistaken) belief that [one] *is the body*", and we can account for the extension of the analysis to the other members of the *khandha* rubric simply as the usual rigour of analysis in such matters in the face of commonsensical naivety. On this reading, then, the application of the term *sakkāyadiṭṭhi* to this whole complex of mistaken views about self is indicative of a certain *primacy* that identification with or of the body as self has among the whole spectrum of possible permutations on this mistake, and certainly, I think it is anecdotally and introspectively plausible that the body is the first, most frequent or most likely object of such an identification. At least in those passages where the term *sakkāya* is applied, therefore (which as we saw are not few), there is arguably a dimension to the concept of *sakkāya* that implies, once more, the centrality of ordinary given embodiment to the problematic of suffering as Buddhism sees it.

Even if this admittedly speculative account of the semantics and possible derivation of the term *sakkāya* is wrong or insupportable, however, we should also note that once the term *sakkāya* is in place and a part of the overall discourse, it surely becomes a significant part of the overall colour and associations of the term *kāya* in Buddhist discourse. It is noteworthy, in my opinion, that there is little in early Buddhist discourse to act as an overtly *positive* model of *kāya* to

match the overtly and highly negative overtone this usage gives to the word. As we shall see below, it is true that *manomayakāya* is regarded as generally associated with relatively "good" parts of the range of cosmological possibilities, and relatively advanced stages of the path of salvific practice. Even there, however, as I will argue below, *kāya* is not regarded as part of the ultimate goal or good, but rather as a stepping-stone on the way to liberation at best, and implicitly therefore as something eventually to be transcended in its turn. *Manomayakāya,* however, is the nearest we come to a "good" body in early Buddhism. I do not think that it is regarded as such an intrinsic good, in its own right, that it could outweigh the negative connotations we see attached to *kāya* in *sakkāyadiṭṭhi.* The application of the term *sakkāyadiṭṭhi* to such a central element of suffering as the mistaken belief in a self, therefore, is a strong indication of the generally negative attitude towards embodiment, as labelled by the term *kāya,* in early Buddhist discourse.

Finally, we should also note that the application of the term *sakkāya* to a problem that Buddhism analyses as spanning all five *khandhas,* and not just the material form (*rūpa*) that comprises the physical body, also draws our attention to a problem of definition when we discuss the body, or embodiment, in Buddhist contexts. It seems more accurate, on the basis of this and other usages, to understand that in most Buddhist contexts, embodiment is not just a matter of the relation of a putative "mind" or "spirit" to the physical body, but rather, that it is possible and usual to also be "embodied" in the same sense in the other components of the phenomenal or experiential being identified in *khandha* analysis as feeling, conception, "reaction" (*saṃskāra*) and consciousness. Such a conception obviously stretches and challenges the ordinary use of the term "body" or "embodiment", and opens up very difficult questions about the definition of body (*kāya*) at work here, the nature of the thing "embodied", and indeed, the very coherence of the concepts of "body" and "embodiment" themselves. These

questions, however, require concerted consideration in their own right, and for the purposes of much of the discussion, it suffices as a first approximation to use the term "body" etc. in its common meaning. For these reasons, I have deliberately been bracketing such questions out of the discussion in this part of my study, and will continue to do so below; here, I simply flag the concept of *sakkāya* as one place where the problem is thrown in especially sharp relief, and ask my reader to bear it in mind for the point when I will discuss it, much later in this dissertation, in connection with the problems raised by the relation of so-called "Cartesianism" to the Buddhism understanding of body.

In sum, then, *sakkāyadiṭṭhi* is probably best interpreted as meaning something like "the mistaken belief that [one] *is* the body [etc.?]". It labels the erroneous identification of self as, in or of any part of the phenomenal person, and Buddhism, when it sets out to counter this erroneous view, analyses the possible objects of this mistaken identification in terms of *khandha* theory (which, let us recall once more, is no guarantee that persons *holding* this view conceive of it in those terms). Insofar as *sakkāya* etc. merely labels this mistaken view, but the concern with that mistaken view is much more widespread in early Buddhist discourse, the problem it labels is extremely central to the Buddhist conception of the religious problematic. Even when we take into account the more limited but still extensive range of contexts in which the term *is* in fact used, however, it is clear that it betrays the centrality of the problem of ordinary given embodiment in at least two ways: the physical body, or the *rūpakkhandha,* features prominently among the possible objects of mistaken identification, and the term *sakkāya* also features the word *kāya* "body", which may indicate that some primacy of body as an object of mistaken identification lies behind the coinage of the term, and in any case was likely to have coloured perception of the term *kāya* with a significant negative bias once the term was in place. In all, then, even on a conservative reading of the extent of its corporeal

tone or implications, the doctrine of *sakkāyadiṭṭhi* is one more place where we clearly see the centrality of ordinary given embodiment to the overall religious problematic as it is perceived in early Buddhism.

2.1.1.4 Hierarchies of embodiment in Buddhist cosmology

A final indication of the extent to which ordinary given physical embodiment is a big part of the problem for Buddhism is found in the attitudes to embodiment implicit in its cosmology.

In the usual cosmological and meditative hierarchies, beings in the lowest realm, that is the *kāmadhātu* (*kāmavacara, kāmaloka*) or "realm of desire", are in a significant sense *more embodied* than beings in higher dimensions. Beings in the *rūpadhātu* or "realm of [pure] form" have only two of the five physical senses, viz. sight and hearing;[176] beings in the *arūpya-dhātu* are only "embodied" in pure consciousness.[177] This scale of degrees of embodiment, moreover, corresponds to a scale of moral dangers and opportunities. Beings too low on the scale, like hell-beings and hungry ghosts, are far less capable of rising above their ordinary conditions of embodiment to even temporarily ascend to higher realms, and this fact is implicitly related to the relative hopelessness of their moral condition. Humans, by contrast, though embodied in the same order as such beings, are relatively happy in being able by exceptional meditative attainment to ascend to higher orders. Beings in the higher realms, in virtue of their reduced sensory capacities, are exposed to relatively little temptation or risk of indulging the passions.

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[176] The association between the *rūpadhātu* and higher levels of moral worth can also be seen in passages that suggest that rebirth among the *devas* of the *rūpadhātu,* in a *manomayakāya,* is the lot of certain accomplished meditator monks and even, in one case, a pious and generous layman; see below, p. 234, 239.

[177] See Gethin, *Foundations* 118. Note, of course, that the idea that a being can be "embodied" in mind alone wreaks some havoc with the contours of the usual "mind-body dichotomy" (and is presumably related to the idea of *manomayakāya*). For the moment, however, I will simply take it as read that even if mind is a form of "embodiment", there is still a scale on which the body of physical material form is more problematic.

The implication of this hierarchy of embodiment and danger is clearly that the flesh is a problem.

We should also not forget that for Buddhism, "ordinary" (as opposed to ideal) embodiment includes "incarnation" (derivationally almost a literal twin to the word "embodiment" itself) not just as a human being, but in any of the five or six destinies of *saṃsāra,* including the three evil destinies (*durgati*) of animals, *pretas* and hell-beings. As incarnate beings, we are all susceptible to rebirth in these conditions. As bad as embodiment might look from the human standpoint, therefore, for basic Buddhism, things can get a hell of a lot worse (to coin a phrase).

2.1.2 The ordinary given social body and its "deconstruction" in early Buddhism

Thus far we have considered various dimensions in which physical embodiment is problematic for early Buddhism. We now turn to examine evidence that "social" embodiment is equally widely and systematically regarded as problematic.

Thus far in our consideration of the status of the ordinary given body, we have also focused largely on what might be called the descriptive dimension of the problem, that is, the ways that canonical texts characterise the body as part of the problem that forms the starting point of the Buddhist project. Here, however, in turning our attention to the social body, we also must turn to consideration of a more normative dimension of the attitude displayed to the ordinary given body. The reason for this is simple; the texts do not, to my knowledge, spend much effort on critiquing what I here call the "ordinary social body". They do, however, prescribe a range of practices with relation to the social body, and I will argue that we can infer that these practices are presented as (partial) remedies to problematic aspects of the given body and our relation to it. Given that any normative agenda is often a kind of mirror image of some descriptive

understanding of a problem, these normative practices fill out the picture we have already begun to adumbrate above with more overtly descriptive materials, and add further dimensions to our understanding of the problematic nature of given embodiment in early Buddhism. Consideration of them is therefore not just profitable, but necessary if we are to have a proportional sense of the full extent to which the dissatisfactory nature of ordinary embodiment is central to the salvific project essayed by the early tradition.

One of the most important domains in which we find that a proper relation to the body is proposed as a goal of practice is, fittingly, through the very corporeal medium of the lived daily reality of monastic life. Indeed, the body of the ideal monastic, as his or her behaviour is prescribed in the monastic rule, is perhaps the earliest place in Buddhism that we find something that could aptly be described as an "ideal body", in the specific sense that the monastic rule constructs for the monk a certain kind of ideal relation to and use of the body, and a certain set of ideal significations with which the monastic body is to be inscribed. We should note, in the context of this largest study, that even inasmuch as this (individual) monastic body warrants the label of "ideal body", it is not named as such – that is, there is no special *term* by which this body is known to emic discourse, and the identification of it as an ideal body,[178] and the relation we thereby draw it into with other forms of given and ideal body in Buddhist discourse, is certainly one that I make etically as an outside analyst. We should also note, for purposes of comparison with other kinds of ideal body in Buddhist practice and discourse, that the monastic body so constructed is not a special property of the Buddha. In terms of both these parameters, then, the ideal monastic body will fall entirely outside the self-imposed limits of any study that defines its object in terms either of a particular item of emic terminology – most typically *kāya* – or in terms only of bodies special to the Buddha; and it will

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[178] "Natural symbols will not be found in individual lexical items;" Douglas, *Natural Symbols* 87.

also fall outside the limits of any study that defines its object solely in terms of doctrinal constructs, and deliberately or unconsciously excludes practice. It is surely for these reasons that the ideal monastic body has never before been considered in relation to the problem of ideal *buddhakāya* that has so mesmerised previous study of bodies in Buddhist practice and discourse. Yet, as I hope to show here, there are lessons in the norms that inform the Buddhist monastic rule for the analysis of broader discourses about ideal bodies, particularly in terms of what it can tell us about the Buddhist critique of the ordinary given social body and the methods by which Buddhist practice proposes to correct for the inadequacies of that body.

Obviously, the topic of the Buddhist monastic regimen is vast, but for the kind of general suggestions I want to make here, I hope it will suffice to illustrate my points from the Pāli *Pātimokkha* as a representative (and early) text. I will use the version of the *Pātimokkha* for the male *saṃgha,* but I think that most of the points I will make in the discussion below, with due allowance for certain patriarchal and sexist biases, apply *mutatis mutandis* to the female *saṃgha* also.

I should also note explicitly that I am, of course, aware, in light of well-known work on the realities of historical monasticism, that the stipulations of *vinaya* texts do not necessarily reflect actualised spiritual attainments or lifestyles. My concern here, however, is to study precisely the ideal figure of the monk *pre*scribed, rather than described, in these texts, as so I think it requires no excuse to simply take the text on its own terms; however much we might doubt that the ideals informing the text were ever realised or realisable in their purest form, it is a more straightforward matter to argue that they were in fact the ideals held forth.

As Patrick Olivelle rightly observes in his "Deconstruction of the Body in Indian Asceticism",[179] we are now the heirs of a large body of work in the humanities and social sciences that has interrogated the notion of an utterly naturalistic, given and universal human body, and can no longer remain unaware that the human body, in addition to being a physical object, is in any social or cultural context also a highly elaborated cultural construct. Olivelle follows the well-known work of Mary Douglas[180] to consider this aspect of the body in which it is "the primary symbol of the social body, the body politic".[181] It is the body as such a construct that we here term the "social body".

When I include this social body in the category of the "given" or "received" body, I mean the following. The social body is obviously not a given in the same sense that the physical body is, that is, something that is a condition of our very biological birth. Humans obviously construct the social body in a much deeper sense than they construct the physical body. However, this is only true of the collective; the social body is a *social* construct, in the sense that it is constructed by the social group as a whole, and not, unless in a very limited sense, by the individual person. This means that for the individual, the social body is given; it is something bequeathed to or imposed upon the person by mechanisms of which they have very little awareness and over which they have little or no control, and in the face of it, the individual is largely as passive as they are in the face of their physical body – the exercise over it at best the same highly marginal degree of agency and choice.

[179] Olivelle, "Deconstruction of the Body", 188. I will return below to the consideration of dimensions of Douglas's work not used by Olivelle.

[180] Particularly chapter of her *Natural Symbols* entitled "The Two Bodies"; Douglas 69-87.

[181] Olivelle, "Deconstruction of the Body" 188.

In what follows, without going too far into the voluminous literature that now exists on this topic, I will first borrow some of Olivelle's apposite comments about the application of this notion to the case of Indian religions, and comment briefly on the ways that they allow us to enrich our consideration of the given body in Buddhist discourse.[182] I will then go to one of Olivelle's sources of theoretical inspiration, the work of Mary Douglas, and consider some respects in which her insights, with modification, can help us appreciate the specific valence of the Buddhist system in contrast to the ascetic ideal that is Olivelle's focus.

Briefly, on the basis of the definitions cited above from Douglas, Olivelle analyses Indian asceticism as a "deconstruction"[183] of the social body", concentrating on the ways ascetic practice subverts or contravenes key codes and symbolisms associated with the construction of four parameters of bodily conduct and experience: notions and codes of purity; sexuality; food; and hair. In what follows, I will touch briefly on the application of Olivelle's observations in respect of each of these dimensions of social embodiment to the Buddhist instance.

Turning then to a quick examination of the lessons we can draw from Olivelle's argument for the Buddhist case, we note first, that Buddhism too "deconstructs" the social body, first, by undermining the way the body is inscribed with socially codified notions of purity. Like non-

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[182] In what follows, I am of course considering primarily the relation to the social body adopted by (or at least prescribed for) the Buddhist *saṃgha,* and not that of the laity. I realise that in so doing I may be perceived as falling back into old essentialist constructions of Buddhism as being only about the monastic ideal. However, my interest in much of this dissertation is precisely in the visions of ideal embodiment, in various dimensions, that Buddhism holds forth, and what they might signify, and so it is entirely appropriate to take the norms proposed for the monastic community seriously for my current purposes; I mean by this treatment to imply nothing about the actual realisation of monastic ideals in historical worlds.

[183] Not meant in any especially technical or post-modern sense; see his n. 2.

Buddhist renunciant ascetics,[184] Buddhist doctrine also dwells on the disgusting impurity of the physical body, its parts and its mechanisms;[185] like them, Buddhist monastics also engage in the contemplation of their body as a corpse.[186] Olivelle rightly relates both of these practices to the fact that in "Brāhmaṇical ideology . . . the body is by definition a pure structure constantly threatened at its boundaries with impurity". The point of practices that produced a heightened awareness of the constant and inescapable impurity of the body, on the very terms of that Brāhmaṇical system, is surely to bring home the ultimate incoherence of the very social body so constructed, and thereby to undermine or "deconstruct" that body to clear the ground for one or another liberatory alternative.

Similarly, like non-Buddhist ascetics, Buddhist monastics are celibate,[187] and Buddhist texts also engage in extensive description of the actual foulness of the beautiful women who usually comprise the object of choice for (male) sexual desire.[188] Once again, Olivelle is surely right when he reads this dimension of the ascetic life as a rejection of the reproductive roles prescribed by ordinary society.[189] We could also extend his argument, I believe, to see in the

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[184] It seems that the core texts Olivelle draws upon for this essay, especially the *Maitreya* and *Nāradaparivrājaka Upaniṣads* (which are included in his *Saṃnyāsa Upaniṣads*), are vastly later in date than the early Pāli materials we are studying here, and so it should be made clear that by these comparisons I mean to imply nothing about possible non-Buddhist influence on these Buddhist practices. See Olivelle, *Saṃnyāsa Upaniṣads,* 8-9.

[185] Olivelle, "Deconstruction of the Body" 190-192.

[186] Olivelle, "Deconstruction of the Body" 193-194. See below, p. 159 ff. and p. 217 ff, for more detailed consideration of the various dimensions of corpse contemplation in the context of Buddhist ideas about the body.

[187] Olivelle, "Deconstruction of the Body" 195-196.

[188] Olivelle, "Deconstruction of the Body" 196-199.

[189] Olivelle, "Deconstruction of the Body" 194-195; Olivelle articulates this argument indirectly, in terms of a rejection of the Vedic ideology of immortality through sons (for men) that celebrates this procreative duty as a religious ideal.

rejection of sexual activity a rejection of an important pillar of gender identity for both men and women; the particularities of gender identity in classical Indian civilisation aside, we can surely anticipate that some such ideal, *mutatis mutandis,* must have been as central to the overall self-construction of people in that remote historical and cultural world as it is in our own times and societies. Celibacy means not only that renunciants reject reproduction, but also that they reject the non-reproductive dimensions of sexuality, including all ordinary social constructions of manliness and womanliness.

Again, like non-Buddhist ascetics, Buddhist monastics reject the whole complex architecture of mainstream Brāhmaṇical codes and constraints on the production, preparation and consumption of food, and, importantly, the ritual regimen of its sharing and sacrifice with other people and gods.[190] In place of this set of codes, monastics adopt a mendicant regimen that, though governed by its own strict rules and codes, rhetorically takes the form of "no code at all". Where the economy of food in mainstream society observes and constantly reinstantiates a whole complex of social roles and meanings, the monastic diet is clearly aimed at a kind of zero state in which no choice or scruple is exercised at all, and the consumption of food becomes merely a logistical exercise undertaken to sustain the body in order that practice not be interrupted by starvation;[191] to the extent that monastic food is, of course, inscribed with a symbolism of its own, that symbolism consistently bears as its message the rejection of all that the ordinary social order stands for.

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[190] Olivelle, "Deconstruction of the Body" 199-203.

[191] See, for example, SN 12.63, "Son's Flesh", on the rejection of food more globally "for amusement or for enjoyment or for the sake of physical beauty and attractiveness"; one should only eat "for the sake of crossing the desert", after the model of parents in the parable who only avoid starvation in the desert by "kill[ing] their only son, dear and beloved, prepar[ing] dried and spiced meat, and by eating their son's flesh"; Bodhi 597-598. More generally, see canonical passages on the dangers of "the nutriment edible food" (*kabalīkāra . . . āhāra*), e.g. SN 12.64, Bodhi 600.

Further, we must note that in the case of food and procreation both, the core value that is served and celebrated by the ordinary social symbolic order, as instantiated and enacted by the construction of the social body in accord with particular dictates, is the desirability of life and the imperative to continue it. The rejection of procreation, of the sexual desire that usually drives procreation, and of meaningful food, therefore, is a profound rejection of the entire world that they sustain – in the Buddhist case, of course, of *saṃsāra,* of birth-and-death. In rejecting procreation and food, renunciants therefore reject, as much as possible, the two main supports of the body – its reproduction and its sustenance – and the rejection of the ordinary sexual and alimentary economies is therefore, indirectly, a symbolic rejection of the body or embodiment itself.

Finally, Olivelle notes that among Buddhist and non-Buddhist ascetics alike, the management of human hair is also intended to achieve a deconstruction of the social order, as it is normally inscribed upon the body through the codification of hairstyle according to gender, social status, phase of life, etc.[192] This comment is, of course, equally apposite to Buddhism, where the shaving of hair and men's beards marks monastic status, and here, once again, we can see a rejection of the "social body" and all it symbolises as the "primary symbol of the . . . body politic".[193] Though clothing is not strictly speaking quite as intrinsic a part of the body as hair, we could easily add to this rejection of hair as a bodily signifier of social meaning the adoption of the monastic habit, which likewise is a rejection of the basic signifier (clothing) of the social place and meaning of the person, via sumptuary codes etc. The monastic habit, the Vinaya is clear, is supposed to be made of rags, of rubbish – i.e. something not really fit to be clothing at

[192] Olivelle, "Deconstruction of the Body" 203 ff.

[193] Olivelle also notes that there are some good reasons to see hair as connected with sexuality and sexual/gender identity, so that shaving is "the opposite of sexual engagement"; 205-206.

all – and we can suspect that the colour prescribed was in its original intention "no particular colour", i.e. no colour fit for clothes in the sumptuary systems operative when the code was elaborated. Of course, we should also note that there is a clear distinction between the adoption of monastic garb as a rejection of clothing as a bodily signifier of social meaning, and the refusal (with the Jains, for instance) to wear any clothes at all; I will return below to this distinction, which is part of a larger pattern of consistent choices made by the system of the Buddhist *saṃgha* in the characteristic manner of its "deconstruction" of the social body.

In the negative image of these "deconstructive" measures shared by Buddhist monasticism and the asceticism that is Olivelle's focus, it is already possible to discern a descriptive characterisation of the ordinary received social body as it is seen by Buddhism. Clearly, if a religious tradition sets out so systematically to reject and undermine the entire set of codes that usually govern the social construction of the body, it must be because that social construction is held to be deeply deficient in some way. What can we see is wrong with the social body Buddhism rejects in this manner, that Buddhism so rejects it?

I believe that we can discern, behind this range of moves to "deconstruct" the social body, a unifying characterisation of the social body as problematic because it is the primary vehicle or medium for the insertion of the person into a social world. In refusing to observe (caste) codes of purity and in mounting a frontal attack on the very grounding *notion* of purity as ultimately incoherent, Buddhist monastics reject the construction, via behaviours of and relating to the body, of their person as the player of a role or occupier of a certain locus and status in the entire social world, as it is oriented to the achievement of secular goals. In refusing reproduction and food, as I mentioned above, they symbolically reject the very notion of the desirability of life in the world, and of the generation or sustenance of the physical body as the

vehicle of that life. In the complex and murky knot of messages communicated by the rejection of hair, we can recognise as one strand the rejection of one of the most fundamental bodily signifiers of the social role and meaning of the person; I have suggested above that the adoption of monastic garb has a similar meaning. In all these dimensions, then, Buddhist monasticism consistently rejects the social body in all its dimensions as a medium of insertion into the social world, and we can read in that rejection a rejection not just of that socially inscribed body but, more fundamentally, of all it stands for.

Behind this rejection, however, I believe we can discern a more fundamental rejection again of not only the social world but of the world *tout court.* The problem with the social world is nothing particular about this or that social construction *of* the world – its political set-up, for instance, or one or another particular set of cultural values – but that the social world is ultimately, functionally oriented to the maintenance and celebration of life in the world as a good. The social world revolves around its own reproduction and maintenance, along with the reproduction and maintenance of all its requisite conditions; non-renunciant "worldly" religion is all about magically or ritually assuring the protection and promotion of life, prosperity, health, even immortality – in other words, more of the same. Buddhism, however, takes as its most characteristic stance a fundamentally opposed rejection of life in the world as an ultimate or even a qualified good: the world is the scene of suffering and *saṃsāra,* and the only ultimate good is its escape. It is logical, therefore, if Buddhist monasticism, at least in its ideal, normative form, also rejects all the trappings of a social world that orients itself to the celebration and maintenance of worldly life, and therefore to all social constructions of the body that underwrite or further secular values. It would be a mistake, however, I believe, to read the Buddhist rejection of the social body as primarily indexed to the social level, and especially to understand it as a rejection of this or that particular historical or cultural social

reality (as, for instance, as a veiled critique of the caste system, or of a feudal slave-holding economic structure). Buddhist monasticism, rather, rejects the social body as one of the most significant and intimate symbols of a more fundamental attachment to worldly existence, and in that sense, we might argue, the rejection of the social body is an incidental feature of the more fundamental rejection of *saṃsāra*, of which the social world is merely a derivative dimension.

If Buddhist monasticism shares with Olivelle's asceticism this fundamental rejection of the social body as a key instantiation of an also rejected world, however, the specific *means* by which it accomplishes that rejection are in many senses the polar opposite of the means adopted by those ascetics. Further consideration of the ordinary given social body in Buddhism thus requires that we go beyond the hints we have borrowed from Olivelle here, and consider the specific forms of (Buddhist) monasticism that make it differ from the wilderness dreadlocked asceticism that is his primary case-in-point. In order to accomplish this, we can usefully turn from the insights provided by Olivelle himself to one of his main theoretical sources, Mary Douglas, and aspects of her theory of the social body of which Olivelle himself makes little use.

In her essay on "The Two Bodies", Mary Douglas makes a number of interesting proposals about correlations, which she claims hold regularly across a wide range of societies and social contexts, between the rigour and fineness of regulation of the "social body" and other features of the social context. Together, these comments set up a fruitful framework within which we may consider the aspects of the monastic regimen I want to examine here, though ultimately, as we shall see, the monastic case is special and also requires certain fundamental modifications to Douglas's approach. Thus, Douglas begins by positing a general consonance of

"style appropriate to a message" "coordinat[ing] all the channels";[194] in other words, she observes that social symbolism tends to be articulated in a parallel manner through a number of different signifying media. On this basis, she argues: "If there is no concern to preserve social boundaries, I would not expect to find concern with bodily boundaries."[195] "Bodily control is an expression of social control – abandonment of bodily control in ritual responds to the requirements of a social experience which is being expressed."[196] "Where role structure is strongly defined, formal behaviour will be valued . . . . Formality signifies social distance, well-defined, public, insulated roles. Informality is appropriate to role confusion, familiarity, intimacy. Bodily control will be appropriate where formality is valued, and most appropriate where the valuing of culture above nature is most emphasised."[197] "Strong social control demands strong bodily control."[198] "Along the dimension from weak to strong pressure [to conform to a certain role structure] the social system seeks progressively to disembody or etherealise the forms of expression. This can be called the purity rule . . . . The more complex the system of classification and the stronger the pressure to maintain it, the more social intercourse pretends to take place between disembodied spirits."[199] For Douglas, this correlation of bodily and social formality and control can be observed not only between entire different societies, but also as a marker of status within a single society:

> "The physical body, by the purity rule, is polarized conceptually against the social body. Its requirements are not only subordinated, they are contrasted with social requirements. The distance between the two bodies is the range of pressure and

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[194] Douglas, *Natural Symbols* 76.

[195] Douglas, *Natural Symbols* 74.

[196] Douglas, *Natural Symbols* 74.

[197] Douglas, *Natural Symbols* 75.

[198] Douglas, *Natural Symbols* 76.

[199] Douglas, *Natural Symbols* 77.

> classification in the society . . . . [D]ifferent degrees of disembodiment . . . express the social hierarchy. The more refinement, the less smacking of the lips when eating, the less mastication, the less the sound of breathing and walking, the more carefully modulated the laughter, the more controlled the signs of anger, the clearer becomes the priestly-aristocratic image."[200]

Douglas goes on to comment that this control expresses itself also in general personal (bodily and sartorial) appearance, as well as behaviour. One "member of the general set of symbolic contrasts expressing formal/informal", she argues, is "the contrast of smooth with shaggy"; she contrasts carefully groomed stockbrokers with (relatively) unkempt artists and academics (who "display a carefully modulated shagginess according to the responsibilities they carry").[201]

Correlated to behaviour and appearance, Douglas claims, are also a range of possible attitudes to control over consciousness. In a discussion of correlations that supposedly obtain, in the observations of Douglas herself and other ethnographers, between these parameters of a society and the various attitudes that are possible in religious contexts towards ritualism, effervescence, and "trance", Douglas further claims that "as trance is a form of dissociation, it will be more approved and welcomed the weaker the structuring of society";[202] conversely, the strict forms of social organisation that expect and value formalism also place high value on the maintenance of clear conscious control. Douglas summarises the correlations she sees between these various dimensions of social, bodily and religious form thus:

> "A social structure which requires a high degree of conscious control will find its style at a high level of formality, stern application of the purity rule, denigration of organic process and wariness towards experience in which control of consciousness is lost."[203]

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[200] Douglas, *Natural Symbols* 77.

[201] Douglas, *Natural Symbols* 77.

[202] Douglas, *Natural Symbols* 79.

[203] Douglas, *Natural Symbols* 86.

In all three of these respects, it is striking that we find exactly the correlations Douglas would lead us to expect in the provisions of the Buddhist monastic rule. Taking behaviour first, when we consider the comportment of the ideal Buddhist monastic, as prescribed in the *Pātimokkha,* we note that in all these respects, it is a very rigorous model, and consistently falls at the most controlled end of the spectrum of possibilities Douglas envisages here.

First, the general prohibition against sexual intercourse and desire, which we already noted above, is not left as such, but further buttressed with a whole range of restrictions on behaviour and comportment clearly designed to avert even the remotest danger of temptation in that direction. Between them, these provisions add up to an image of an extremely circumspect and controlled set of behaviours. Not only is it forbidden to actually engage in intercourse with any partner, "down even to an animal",[204] but the mere omission of semen, "except by a person sleeping", is punishable;[205] all contact with a woman is prohibited;[206] all preparations or enticements to sexual conduct are also systematically excluded;[207] vicariously involvement in sexual relations between others (as go-between) are forbidden;[208] and provisions also exist to prevent (male) monks coming in unnecessary contact with any *bhikkhunī* not related to them;[209] to prevent monks enjoying solitude with any woman;[210] to restrict as much as possible general contact between the male and female *saṃgha*;[211] and so on.

[204] Pārājika 1, Rhys Davids and Oldenberg 4-5.

[205] Saṃghâdisesā 1, Rhys Davids and Oldenberg 7.

[206] Saṃghâdisesā 2, Rhys Davids and Oldenberg 7; Pācittiyā 6. Rhys Davids and Oldenberg 32.

[207] Saṃghâdisesā 3-4, Rhys Davids and Oldenberg 7-8.

[208] Saṃghâdisesā 5, Rhys Davids and Oldenberg 8.

[209] Nissaggiyā Pācittiyā 4-5, Rhys Davids and Oldenberg 20; Nissaggiyā Pācittiyā 17, Rhys Davids and Oldenberg 26; Pācittiyā 25-26, Rhys Davids and Oldenberg 36; Pāṭidesaniyā 1, Rhys Davids and Oldenberg 56.

The basic ascetic attitude to food, like the basic requirement for celibacy, is also ringed about by a host of minor stipulations that extend it and refine it to a high degree of rigour matching Douglas's notion of "strong pressure", "strong control" etc. Not only is the intake of food restricted to the morning and an attempt made to systematically exclude all choice of what is eaten or efforts to make it more palatable,[212] but comportment or etiquette in the act of eating is very closely regulated. Here, and in like provisions we will discuss immediately, Buddhist monastic practice answers most tellingly to Douglas's description of a social system of "strong pressure" or "strong control". When receiving and then eating alms, the monk must "keep [his] mind alert and "pay attention to [his] bowl".[213] He must eat very carefully, rolling food into "round mouthfuls" but not into "too large balls",[214] not opening his mouth too early, not putting his whole hand into the mouth, not talking with his mouth full, not tossing food into his mouth, not nibbling at the balls of food, not stuffing out his cheeks, not shaking his hands about,[215] not scattering lumps of boiled rice, not sticking out his tongue, and not smacking his lips (*capucapu*!); not making a hissing sound(!), not licking his fingers, not licking his bowl, not

[210] Aniyatā 1 and 2, Rhys Davids and Oldenberg 16-17; Pācittiyā 6. Rhys Davids and Oldenberg 33; Pācittiyā 44-45, Rhys Davids and Oldenberg 42.

[211] Pācittiyā 21-24, Rhys Davids and Oldenberg 35-36; 27-30, Rhys Davids and Oldenberg 36-37; Pāṭidesaniyā 2, Rhys Davids and Oldenberg 56.

[212] Pācittiyā 33-40, Rhys Davids and Oldenberg 38-40; Pācittiyā 46-47, Rhys Davids and Oldenberg 42-43; Sekhiyā 29, 30?, 33-37, Rhys Davids and Oldenberg 62-63.

[213] Sekhiyā 28-29, 31-32, Rhys Davids and Oldenberg 62-63.

[214] Sekhiyā 39-40, Rhys Davids and Oldenberg 63.

[215] Rhys Davids and Oldenberg explain that this refers to shaking off particles of rice stuck to the hand (recalling that these rules are all elaborated for a culture where one eats with the bare hand); 64 n. 3.

licking his lips, not taking the water-jar with a hand soiled with food, and not throwing the rinsing from his bowl into the inner court.[216]

Similar rigour is expected in the minutiae of personal comportment in other respects. Monks cannot drink intoxicating liquors, which (especially given the context in which this provision is listed) could well be motivated by the fact that it leads to lax or "incontinent" behaviour.[217] They seem basically to be prohibited from levity, pranks and playfulness: the cannot "poke [another person] with the finger";[218] or engage in hi-jinks in the water when at their bath;[219] or give another monk a fright;[220] or hide another monk's possessions as a practical joke.[221] The monk must go about in the village "with [his] body under proper control",[222] "with downcast eye",[223] and "with robes not pulled up".[224] In the same situation, the monk must also avoid loud laughter, make little noise, avoid swaying the body, arms and head, not put his arms "akimbo", and keep his head uncovered; they may not walk on their heels or toes or "loll".[225] Finally, to add to all these rules of conduct, several rules govern urination and spitting.[226]

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[216] Sekhiyā 41-56, Rhys Davids and Oldenberg 64-65.

[217] Pācittiyā 50, Rhys Davids and Oldenberg 44.

[218] Pācittiyā 51, Rhys Davids and Oldenberg 44.

[219] Pācittiyā 52, Rhys Davids and Oldenberg 44.

[220] Pācittiyā 54, Rhys Davids and Oldenberg 44.

[221] Pācittiyā 60, Rhys Davids and Oldenberg 46.

[222] Sekhiyā 5-6, Rhys Davids and Oldenberg 59.

[223] Sekhiyā 7-8, Rhys Davids and Oldenberg 59-60.

[224] Sekhiyā 9-10, Rhys Davids and Oldenberg 60.

[225] Sekhiyā 11-26, Rhys Davids and Oldenberg 60-62.

[226] Sekhiyā 73-75, Rhys Davids and Oldenberg 67.

It is hard to imagine a code that fits more precisely Douglas's description of conduct that produces the "priestly-aristocratic image" already cited above: " . . . the more refinement, the less smacking of the lips when eating, the less mastication, the less the sound of breathing and walking, the more carefully modulated the laughter . . ." This extreme degree of control in behaviour is matched, as Douglas's theory predicts, with two other parameters in the ideals of Buddhist monasticism. First, monks are, in Douglas's terms, "smooth" and not "shaggy". In contrast to the unkempt rampant hair (the dreadlocks) of the naked solitary wilderness ascetic that Olivelle takes as his primary point of reference, the monastic shaves all body hair, achieving in this regard a kind of absolute "smoothness". Further, despite the fact that the rule of poverty and the proscription of luxury requires monastic habit to be unattractive and devoid of aesthetic appeal, monks are notably clad, not naked like wilderness ascetics, and the monk is further required to be extremely careful and proper in his dress.[227] Second, it is also striking that, as Douglas's theory predicts, these values in the Buddhist monastic relation to the body are matched by a concern to acquire and exert a "high degree of conscious control". In fact, it might be argued that this is the essence of the Buddhist project: the aim is to attain "complete and perfect awakening/wakefulness" (*saṃyaksaṃbodhi*); as we have just noted above, "mindfulness" (*smṛti*), or a kind of complete and unbroken power of perfect present consciousness, is an important practice and goal; motives for action other than conscious decision (as desire, impulse *saṃskāra* etc.) are uniformly regarded as suspect; and so on.

The close fit in respect of all three of these parameters between this fine and ramified regulation of the body in the monastic rule and Douglas's description of high-pressure, high-control social structures, however, begs an obvious question. We already observed above the

[227] Sekhiyā 1-4, Rhys Davids and Oldenberg 59.

extent to which it is possible to read Buddhist renunciation, like the other forms of Indian asceticism analysed by Olivelle, as a "deconstruction of the social body". What does it mean if a religious practice that rejects the social body at one and the same time requires that its members comport themselves as hyper-correct paragons (or parodies) of the greatest degree of rigour conceivable in bodily control? Does this mean that Buddhist invalidates Douglas's claims about the correlation between such bodily control and other dimensions of society? Or is Buddhist monasticism perhaps rather a failure, a system that, despite its initial impetus to reject the social body, ends up replicating unconsciously all the most exacting and petty bodily theatre of worldly social strictures and power?

I think that the solution to these apparent conundrums lies in recognising and correcting for a natural bias in Douglas's presentation, which, it seems, is exclusively driven by the consideration of social forms in what we might call "natural" human societies.[228] I mean the word "natural" here in the same sense that linguists talk about "natural" (vs. "artificial") languages, meaning that the society in question is one that has sprung up organically through an historical process beyond the intention or conscious design of any of its members, and not as the deliberate product of the mind of a single architect; I do not, of course, mean to imply that such societies are somehow "natural" in the sense that is sometimes claimed for them by ideological justifications of this or that specific society, i.e. that they somehow take a form that is only right and proper for a society. On this definition, "natural" societies also have another notable feature in common, which is that they all share the same twofold pragmatic end: first, they seek their own preservation and self-perpetuation, in a manner somewhat analogous to the natural imperative of self-preservation observed in biological organisms; second, they seek

[228] This sociological bias towards the descriptive study of ordinary worldly models is something Douglas shares with Foucault, and, as I will argue much later in this dissertation, the bias creates problems in thinking about Buddhist salvific practice and ideals in the case of Foucault as well.

to promote of the worldly prosperity of their members. The intimate relation between these two goals will be apparent.

The ideal Buddhist monastic order (like some other monastic orders), however, is, in its primary intention as an engine of salvific endeavour, diametrically opposed to "natural" societies in both these senses. It is of course true that once it is up and running, a monastic order undergoes its own processes of historical development and change that mean that it ends up shaped by dynamics somewhat similar to undesigned "natural" societies. Nonetheless, a monastic order, founded like the Buddhist order on an explicit rule, is a consciously designed social system, and for that reason, it seems appropriate to refer to it as an "artificial" society.[229] Further, the ideal monastic community does not exist for the primary purpose of either its own preservation or the promotion of the worldly prosperity of its members (once again, historical ironies and the complexities of real institutions on the ground notwithstanding). It ideally exists, rather, for the sole aim of facilitating the accession of its individual members to the state of spiritual grace or felicitude, however that is defined in the particular tradition in question. Any other goals that the institution sets about serving, even if those other goals necessarily do include both the self-perpetuation of the institution itself and the promotion of certain baseline levels of worldly well-being for its members, are (once more, ideally) ancillary to this central goal. Certainly, despite the obvious complexities and tensions that arise both in principle and also in historical fact out of the imperfect provisions to that end contained in the Vinaya, it seems to me that the only coherent reading of e.g. the *Pātimokkha* provisions is that the central intention of the whole system is to promote the individual salvation of members of

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[229] We might note that in the modern era, there is a problem regarding the extent to which nation-states with written constitutions are "natural" or "artificial" in this sense, but this problem need not detain us here; in the premodern context where Buddhist monasticism was first elaborated, the contrast between "natural" and "artificial" in this sense still stands.

the *saṃgha*; no other (more cynical) reading could account so globally for as many of the provisions, nor their internal relations with one another.

Douglas, then, envisages only the case of "natural" societies, and there is no particular reason to expect that her analysis will apply in all its particulars to the exceptional case of the kind of "artificial" society comprised by the ideal Buddhist *saṃgha*. Now, if these terms are acceptable, it is also noteworthy that another feature of Douglas's analysis is closely linked to this bias towards the consideration only of "natural" societies: the fact that Douglas presumes throughout a particular direction of causation from some of the social features she studies to others. Her analysis notably moves from "the degree of social control/pressure" etc., which seems to be taken as a given, to concomitants in bodily comportment and appearance, attitudes to trance in religious observance, and so on. In other words, she seems to take the scale and intensity of social power as a primary given in her analysis – which certainly makes perfect sense in the case of "natural" societies, where what is ultimately at stake is providing on various levels of the overall social structure for the kinds of political relations that will make the society as a whole functional and sustainable, i.e. for the fulfilment of its (worldly) ends. Following on this primary fact, the kinds of expression Douglas studies, including codification of the body, "express . . . social control"; they "respond to the requirements of social experience"; they "signif[y] social distance" etc.; they are "demanded by . . . strong social control", and so forth. In other words, the facts of individual expression follow passively upon the primary requirements of the social structure as a whole, which is governed extrinsically by imperatives of power in turn presumably determined by the pragmatic requirements of governance and productive sustainability.

By contrast, however, there is no reason, in the case of an "artificial" society like the Buddhist *saṃgha,* to treat the overall social order as necessarily primary, or as a pre-existent reality that somehow conditions or determines other domains of social behaviour and signification. Where the entire social structure is an artificial construct, and moreover one that is explicitly crafted to serve a deliberately non-worldly (not to say anti-worldly) end, it is equally possible, not to say likely, that the overall social structure might be a reflection of a primary determinant located on some other level of the overall system, or, equally, that it might merely be one among an array of parameters determined in common by some non-social concern extrinsic, in a sense, to them all.

I contend that the latter is in fact precisely the most coherent reading of the *Pātimokkha* and the ideal monastic order it prescribes, both in respect of the provisions examined above and also in respect of some of its other dimensions, which we will examine immediately. As I argued above, the monastic order has in common with the "dreadlocked" model of naked wilderness asceticism a rejection of ordinary given social embodiment in all its dimensions. Unlike the "dreadlocked" model, however, Buddhism does not reject the very idea of a social structure *per se,* and nor does it, like the "dreadlocked" model and other eremitic romantic spiritual naturalisms found outside India (such as what sometimes goes by the name of "primitive" Daoism, for example) imagine that the transcendence of ordinary social embodiment or the problems it is riven with is to be found in a return to some putative pre-societal natural state of anomie, where the spiritual seeker becomes an animal-like monad dwelling symbolically beyond the pale of culture. Monasticism, rather, including Buddhist monasticism, *appropriates* the techniques and structures of worldly society, just as early Buddhism appropriated other items from the symbolic repertoire of ordinary Brāhmaṇism like the language of the sacrifice, and turns it on its ear, putting it in the service of an agenda radically opposed to all that

ordinary social structure promotes and stands for. In other words, what we see in a monastic system is a kind of paradoxical social order devoted to the profoundly antisocial end of breaking down ("deconstructing") ordinary social norms and the embodiment that instantiates them. The mirroring of form between the most hyper-social (and therefore hyper-worldly) levels of "priestly-aristocratic" control and style and this system, so profoundly anti-social in at least its ideal intent, is in a sense incidental, and masks the fact that the same means are turned here to diametrically opposed ends; opposites meet, and the consummation of unworldly accomplishments ends up looking, on this model, deceptively close to the consummation of the worldly.

In the Buddhist case, this paradox is rendered particularly acute by the fact that ideally, this mechanism operates not to construct a brave new person in place of the deconstructed and flawed person of the rejected world, but to raze that person to the ground and erect precisely nothing in its place, leaving the ground clear rather for more thoroughgoing deconstructive practices that further uproot even the naturalistic roots of the "natural symbol" represented by the social body. In this vein, I believe that the *Pātimokkha* can be interpreted as a consistent attempt to reduce the social person to a zero through the twin mechanisms of conformity to prescriptions of conduct ideally all-encompassing in the fineness of their grain, and the profoundly unpragmatic, purely ritualistic ("useless") nature of those prescriptions.

When I say that these prescriptions are ideally all-encompassing, I have in mind the idea that if the intent of the prescriptions were fully realised, there would apparently arise no situation in which there was not a ready-made prescription for correct conduct. The daily and yearly round of the monks is simplified and routinised to circumscribe the likely range of situations they will encounter. They are freed of all worldly obligations and responsibilities, in order that

they not find themselves in situations where their duties or pragmatic concerns force decisions upon them. In the plain and clear space created by these artifices, the code seems clearly to attempt to envisage all significant situations that will still arise, and attempt to prescribe precisely the correct behaviour that obtains in each. The thrust, it seems, is ideally towards a system in which the monk always knows how to act, but never has to exercise individual judgement or agency. Similarly, all expression of individual quirk or personality (pranks, random unritualised movements, unnecessary speech etc.) are also ruled out, so that he becomes, in his social being, an entirely generic monk.[230] In other words, the monk is, as much as is feasible, completely effaced as a social actor, both within and without the *saṃgha,* reduced asymptotically towards the ideal of an agentive cipher, and in this sense, is enabled by the total support provided by the artificial social engine of the rule to relinquish entirely his being as a meaningful social person in worldly terms.

When I say that this same end is served by the unpragmatic and ritualistic nature of the prescriptions, I mean that the formal mockery of an ordinary social person constructed by monasticism is, in the terms of ordinary social values, strictly gratuitous – a complete waste of time, resources and space. The fact that no worldly end is achieved by the monastic system's radical obviation of personality and personal agency is as important to realisation of zero personhood as that obviation itself.[231] If we imagine a situation in which an equally docile and

[230] Cf. the Zen notion of "polishing", which seems informed by the same understanding of the efficacy of the monastic training.

[231] Comparisons suggest themselves here to other systems that, in various ways, also propose this counterintuitive idea of apparently functional form divorced from pragmatic ends. The Confucius of *Analects,* for example, seems concerned to impress upon his followers that rites or ritual forms (*li* 禮) are an end unto themselves, and not to be practised in an instrumentalist mode. The ideal of *tyāga* preached in the *Bhagavadgīta,* also, proposes in essence that one should undertake one's duties in an ethical frame that makes no reference to the pragmatic ends they might achieve. (Obviously there are also significant differences between these two systems and between both and Buddhism, and I do not mean to suggest that they are "the same"; the comparison, however, so far as it holds in respect of this one dimension of ethical orientation, is arguably significant.) The monasticism described here, however, is at least in its

obedient ideal were constructed in the service of some worldly goal (as, for instance, in the construction of the ideal revolutionary in Chinese propaganda under Mao), the social person so constructed, rather than being a cipher, would be a paragon, a kind of perfectly meaning*ful* instantiation of the values and imperatives of a larger social order. Distopian fantasies of various stripes, from Orwell's *1984* to the recent pulp Hollywood film *The Island,* have rendered all too familiar the creeps we feel when confronted with the image of such political drones.[232] In such a case, it would be meaningless to try and speak of the "deconstruction of the social person"; we would be speaking, rather, of a kind of totalisation of the social person, such that there was nothing of the individual left, not because the ground had been cleared for some more radical liberatory practice, but because the social ideal had squeezed it out entirely.

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surface form more radical than either of these models. They propose the adoption of a certain attitude towards acts that nonetheless remain worldly in their content and effects. Buddhist monasticism, it seems, seeks by contrast to insulate the act from the possibility of its instrumental misconstruction by replacing ordinary behaviours with acts which, being fairly useless, themselves admit less easily of (worldly) instrumentalist readings. In this regard, at least, it seems apt to speak of monasticism as a total ritual lifestyle, in the sense that ritual, too, is often quite strictly "meaningless" (cf. Frits Staal, "The Search for Meaning") and "useless" in ordinary worldly terms; the invocation of the category of ritual, however, brings us to one of the most interesting dimensions of the comparison with Confucius, who is notable of course for his insistence upon ritual as one of the central categories of his thought. Confucius, it seems, takes the ends-unto-itself-ness of ritual as his paradigm case, and in this sense might be said to start out from common ground with monasticism, in that both refuse instrumentality (worldly use). But where monasticism develops this insight into a lifestyle where every act is in fact as strictly useless as paradigmatic ritual acts, Confucius takes the reverse approach, and expands the *mindset* of ritual so that it infuses even the most mundane (pragmatic) of actions (cf. Herbert Fingarette). In its own way, of course, the *Bhagavadgīta* ideal of *tyāga* has the same basic thrust, though in that case we would probably replace the notion of "ritual" or "rite", in Confucian terms, with that of "sacrifice"(*tyāga,* "renunciation, giving up").

[232] Of course, the uncomfortably close congruence between the form of the monastic institution and the form of totalitarian political systems that seek to quash personality in the quest for absolute obedience to group imperatives is not merely a matter of coincidental resemblance. Brian Victoria's *Zen at War,* for instance, explores in discomfiting detail one historical instance in which aspects of the monastic form, and its rhetoric, were appropriated by a war-mongering modern nation-state and turned to worldly political ends, often to outrageously unethical effect. Even as we acknowledge that the monastic form is vulnerable to such abuse, however, we should not confuse that observation with the misinterpretation that such abuses somehow expose the hidden essence of the system; to give a crude analogy, it would be easy to murder someone with a scalpel, but this does not mean that the scalpel itself is an intrinsically evil weapon.

It is important that monastic life be pragmatically useless for another reason too. Life can be rendered conceptually simple total ritualisation only because, ideally, nobody in the order need actually do anything in particular, and so the routines of daily and yearly life can be decided entirely according to abstract criteria, with next to no reference to practical need. This is one obvious reason why the monastic order must be parasitic upon the surrounding lay society; in order to be freed from the unpredictable demands of need and pragmatic use, monks must have their very minimal physical needs met by lay patrons.

We might summarise the relation between these two prongs of the Buddhist monastic appropriation and inflection of the mechanisms used to construct ordinary social bodies as follows. Monasticism hijacks the engine of social construction, and harnesses its power for the counterintuitive project of deconstructing the social body and person. It constructs, in the image (or even in parody) of the ordinary social person, the form of a total social person that in all salient respects is, by definition, as much a non-person as possible in its content. Monasticism is thus the machine of social construction thrown into reverse, working against its own grain.

Beyond the observations already made above, then, we can further interpret other provisions of the *Pātimokkha* as intended to this same end. In combination with the observations we have already made, I believe this provides us with the most coherent interpretation of the underlying intentions of the code, and therefore of the ideal monastic person and body it envisages.

First, we note that the prohibition of all sexual contact or sexualised conduct banishes permanently all trace of one of the great social uses of the person – the reproductive. In like

manner, the abstention from the pursuit of worldly livelihood effaces the other great social use a person usually has – the productive. We can note, indeed, that as is well known, this rejection of the productive imperative is generalised to the refusal of all participation in the productive economy, including the commandment to hold (as much as possible) no property;[233] it is clear that the rules attempt to realise a state as close to no ownership of property as is logistically feasible while still allowing monks to be clad, have their sicknesses ministered to, and beg for their food. Numerous provisions prevent the holding of additional property for more than extremely restricted temporary periods;[234] and of course it scarcely needs noting in this connection that monks are forbidden to own gold or silver, or engage in money transactions.[235] The overall effect of these provisions is to render the monk an absolutely economic nullity.[236]

Other rules as clearly intended to reduce a monk's life relation to his physical body and its needs to a barely functional minimum, and so strip his existence of any of its usual (superadded) social meanings. Numerous provisions are designed specifically to exclude the pursuit of luxury, status or pleasure in clothing,[237] food,[238] rugs,[239] and other appurtenances.[240] Similarly,

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[233] Cf. also the rule against digging, Pācittiyā 10. Rhys Davids and Oldenberg 33.

[234] Nissaggiyā Pācittiyā 1, Rhys Davids and Oldenberg 18; 3, Rhys Davids and Oldenberg 20; Nissaggiyā Pācittiyā 16, Rhys Davids and Oldenberg 26; Nissaggiyā Pācittiyā 21, Rhys Davids and Oldenberg 27; Nissaggiyā Pācittiyā 23-24, Rhys Davids and Oldenberg 27; Nissaggiyā Pācittiyā 28, Rhys Davids and Oldenberg 29-30; etc.

[235] Nissaggiyā Pācittiyā 18-20, Rhys Davids and Oldenberg 26-27. Cf. also the rule against picking up jewels, Pācittiyā 84, Rhys Davids and Oldenberg 53.

[236] This may also arguably be seen even in the prohibition against even quite passing involvement between the *saṃgha* and armed forces (remembering that military might can be usefully understood as an integral part of the overall endeavour of a society to supply its material needs, and therefore as an extension of the economy); Pācittiyā 48-50, Rhys Davids and Oldenberg 43.

[237] Nissaggiyā Pācittiyā 6-9, Rhys Davids and Oldenberg 20-22; Nissaggiyā Pācittiyā 27, Rhys Davids and Oldenberg 28; Pācittiyā 91-92, Rhys Davids and Oldenberg 54-55. Cf. also the requirement that new robes be disfigured, Pācittiyā 58, Rhys Davids and Oldenberg 45.

[238] See n. 212.

all provisions in the *Pātimokkha* regarding to dwellings and property also seem calculated to systematically exclude the possibility that the dwelling-place will come to bear any of the social signification that usually attaches to a personal abode,[241] and thus end up operating as an extension or appurtenance of the monk as a social person. The hut or residence must be made to strict measure;[242] and there are other rules (in the same spirit noted above for food etc.) that prevent the pursuit of comfort and luxury in other ways.[243]

I argued above that in the exceptional case of the "artificial" society of the monastic community, Douglas's assumptions about the usual direction of causation, whereby constructions of the body and control of consciousness are determined by larger social and political imperatives, do not apply. In the monastic case, rather, I have argued, the social structure is an artificial construct designed to make possible a very particular kind of religious project. In keeping with this observation, we can see that in addition to these various provisions that govern the disposition and regulation of the body and person of the individual monk, provisions that govern the *saṃgha* as a whole are also directly or indirectly tailored to serve the same ends. The "body" of the *saṃgha* as a whole is also governed by quite strict expectations about its comportment – the way it meets, the way it resolves disputes, the ways

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239 Nissaggiyā Pācittiyā 11-15, Rhys Davids and Oldenberg 24-26; Pācittiyā 89, Rhys Davids and Oldenberg 54.

240 So the bowl, Nissaggiyā Pācittiyā 22, Rhys Davids and Oldenberg 27; fancy needlecases, Pācittiyā 86, Rhys Davids and Oldenberg 53; excessively high beds, Pācittiyā 87, Rhys Davids and Oldenberg 53-54; stuffed bedsteads and chairs, Pācittiyā 88, Rhys Davids and Oldenberg 54; the charmingly-named "itch-cloth", Pācittiyā 90, Rhys Davids and Oldenberg 54.

241 Olivelle comments in the essay cited above on the symbolic connections between person/body and house, and the relationship between homelessness and the ascetic relation to the body; Olivelle, "Deconstruction of the Body" 191-193.

242 Saṃghâdhisesā 6-7, Rhys Davids and Oldenberg 8-9.

243 Pācittiyā 19, Rhys Davids and Oldenberg 35.

its members interact, and so on. Indirectly, we see evidence of the same concerns in the even wider circle of manifold provisions made to protect the unity of the community and its internal harmony, even down to quite small details.[244] If the artificial society of the monastic order is a special modification of the ordinary social machine designed to deconstruct the social person, then all measures adopted to ensure the survival of that artificial society are ultimately motivated by that same goal, in contrast to the situation that obtains in "natural" societies where the imperative for self-preservation comes close to being the ultimate *raison-d'être* for the whole system. We can thus include under the same analysis provisions designed to ensure smooth relations with the laity, a good public image, and thereby a reliable steady stream of patronage;[245] and provisions that apparently aim at segregating the monastic community from the laity[246] and even from the lower ranks of postulants,[247] presumably in order to ensure that the other provisions of the monastic life can operate in as undiluted a fashion as possible.

In sum, then, a very large proportion of the *Pātimokkha* rules can be read as aiming, in one way or another, to reduce the person of the monk to a social zero, and therefore, where we assume the ordinary given social body as a starting point, to "deconstruct" that social body in Olivelle's terms. The body of the monk is stripped of its productive and reproductive functions, and systematically rendered useless to ordinary social ends, which already goes very far towards rendering it socially meaningless (recall that "meaningless" and "futile" overlap in meaning). It

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[244] Saṃghâdisesā 8-12, Rhys Davids and Oldenberg 9-12; Nissaggiyā Pācittiyā 25, Rhys Davids and Oldenberg 28; Pācittiyā 12-18, Rhys Davids and Oldenberg 33-34; Pācittiyā 68-70; Pācittiyā 74-81, Rhys Davids and Oldenberg 51-52; Rhys Davids and Oldenberg 47-48; and other rules in the same spirit.

[245] E.g. Saṃghâdisesā 9, Rhys Davids and Oldenberg 13-14; Pācittiyā 32, Rhys Davids and Oldenberg 38. The same might be said to be a partial goal of rules governing propriety between monks and laywomen already cited above; of the rules cited above that dictate special care in personal comportment when in the village on begging rounds or eating; and so on.

[246] E.g. Pācittiyā 31, Rhys Davids and Oldenberg 37; Pācittiyā 85, Rhys Davids and Oldenberg 53.

[247] Pācittiyā 4-5. Rhys Davids and Oldenberg 32; Pācittiyā 8-9. Rhys Davids and Oldenberg 33.

is further stripped of such signifiers as hair and clothing that locate their bearer in the overall structure of ordinary worldly society. The monk does not participate in any of the rules and systems that signify social meaning through food, and food is rather reduced to a mere physical sustenance that sustains the body of the monastic as a bare physical existent. The same denial of ordinary social meaning is effected with regard to housing and possessions, as other necessary material supports of the body. Unlike the system of ascetic practices at the focus of Olivelle's study, however, monasticism does not, in rejecting the ordinary given social construction of the body and the person, thereby reject all the forms and mechanisms of society *per se*. Rather, the fundamental innovation represented by monasticism is the radical idea of using social means to subvert ordinary social ends. An entire artificial social order is constructed which, in virtue of its parasitic reliance on lay patronage, can be pragmatically useless, and in virtue of that pragmatic uselessness, can devote all its energies to harnessing the engine of social construction to subsume the individual monk entirely to the category of a generic ideal monk. The generic ideal monk so constructed, moreover, is carefully designed to reduce all social meaning accruing to the body or person of the monk as close to zero as possible. The ideal monk is the paradox of a socially constructed, ideal *non*-person, and the ideal monastic order comprised of such non-persons is the paradox of a society of non-persons, that is, an anti-society.

To return, then, to the relation to the given social body that is our proper topic here in the context of our larger study, where I began this section by noting that in a sense, the body of the ideal monk is the first "ideal Buddhist body" we have to treat in this study, that characterisation only applies in a special sense. To begin with, it is clear, in light of the above analysis, that the Buddhist critique of the ordinary given social body, while only ever implied as the descriptive shadow of normative practices with regard to that body, is thoroughgoing and

radical. As I argued above, the interpretation that makes the best sense of those normative practices is that the social body is rejected because it is inscribed with the values of a social order that treats being in the world as a self-evident good, and the social body is therefore rejected merely as part of a more global rejection of being in the world as a whole, which is understood as full of suffering. As a remedy for this fundamental flaw in ordinary social embodiment, the Buddhist monastic regimen certainly appropriates the technologies of social construction of the body, but this surface resemblance to the processes of ordinary social embodiment can be misleading, because the monastic rule turns those technologies to the radically heterogeneous ends of effacing the ordinary social construction of the body entirely. To the extent that it is meaningful to talk about the ideal body of the monk constructed by the monastic regiment as an "ideal embodiment" in the larger terms of this study, therefore, that ideal embodiment is paradoxical, since it is an idea that attempts to embody the notion of having no "social body" at all, by all ordinary definitions thereof.

It may not be going too far to say, therefore, that the aim of this series of exercises is in a sense to "disembody" oneself, in the terms of the social body, in this sense: if *em*-bodiment is the state of being lodged or "invested"[248] in a body, the process of reducing the social body to zero described here is a process of dislodging, disinvestment or divestment, so that one no longer understands "oneself" (whatever that is) to be significantly "in" that body in the naïve sense we usually assume. This divestment frees the practitioner from the given social body, and in this sense it is a liberation.

The ideal vision of the body comprised by this imperative for the monk or nun to divest him- or herself of the given social body can only be described as an "ideal body" if we further stipulate

[248] So OED, "to invest or clothe (a spirit) with a body", s.v. "embody, imbody".

another caveat, and in this it resembles the other major form of "ideal body" we will examine in this chapter, the *manomayakāya.* That is to say, it is merely a stepping stone on the way to the spiritual goal, and not in any very strong sense a feature of the goal itself. The given social body needs to be cleared away because it is, as a primary site of attachment to the world, an obstruction to the path of practice. But we could certainly not conclude from this that the effacement of the given social body would in and of itself be sufficient for the realisation of the ideal spiritual state. It might be meaningful to say of the ideal monastic body that it is an "ideal Buddhist body" insofar as it is a better mode of embodiment prescribed in Buddhist practice. At the same time, however, it falls far short of being an "ideal Buddhist embodiment" in the much stronger sense that it is a *form in which it is considered possible to embody the ultimate Buddhist ideal.* As we will see much later in this dissertation, Buddhist traditions were ultimately to envisage "ideal embodiments" in this much stronger sense, but at this early stage in the tradition, that remains merely a far-off possibility.

2.1.3 Mindfulness of the body

We will next consider another set of practices that set forth a different kind of normative attitude to the ordinary given body, that is, a set of sometimes and variously related meditations that specifically take the body as their object. Here, the focus turns once more away from the social body and back to the physical body, though as we shall see, there are also some dimensions of this practice that we can interpret as relating to the social body in part, and in particular, to the construction of the social body through codes of purity.

Widespread throughout the Pāli canon, we find descriptions of a practice called "contemplation of the body as the body" (*kāye kāyānupassana*) or "mindfulness of the body". This practice is indicative of the centrality of embodiment to the Buddhist problematic, and shows that the

cultivation of a correct awareness of and relation to the body was also understood as a large part of the solution. As a starting point in examining this theme in the Pāli materials, we will first look at the way this practice is presented in its most developed form, in the *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna-sutta* DN 22.

In this text, the Buddha presents "one way (*ekayāna*![249]) to the purification of beings, for the overcoming of sorrow and distress, for the disappearance of pain and sadness, for the gaining of the right path, for the realisation of Nibbāna: - that is to say the four foundations of mindfulness (*cattāro satipaṭṭhānā*)".[250] These four foundations of mindfulness are:

1. contemplating body as body (*kāye kāyānupassī*);
2. contemplating feelings as feelings (*vedanāsu vedanānupassī*);
3. contemplating mind as mind (*citte cittānupassī*);
4. contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects (*dhammesu dhammānupassī*).[251]

In each case, the monk is said to engage in the relevant contemplation "ardent, clearly aware and mindful, having put aside hankering and fretting for the world" (*ātāpī sampajāno satimā vineyya loke abhijjhādomanassaṃ*).[252] The result of engaging correctly in these various

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[249] Obviously not to be confused with the *ekayāna* spoken of in SdhN, *Lotus Sūtra* and other Mahāyāna texts.

[250] Walshe 335.

[251] Further on the development of the four foundations of mindfulness, see Cox, "Mindfulness and Memory"; Lin Li-kouang, *L'aide-mémoire de la vraie loie* (*Saddharma-smṛtyupasthānasūtra*), *Recherches sur un Sūtra Développé du Petit Véhicule,* Publications du Musée Guimet Bibliothèque d'Études 54 (Paris: Adrien-Maisonneuve, 1949), 118-127; and Lambert Schmithausen, "Die vier Konzentrationen der Aufmerksamkeit: Zur geschichtlichen Entwicklung einer spirituellen Praxis des Buddhismus", *Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft und Religionswissenschaft* 4 (1976), 241-266 (references given in Cox, 90 n. 6).

[252] Walshe 335.

meditations is described throughout the same text by the formula, "He abides independent, not clinging to anything in the world."[253]

As this list makes clear, the contemplation of the body is not on its own the entire path to liberation, and we must remember that the mindfulness recommended by the *sutta* also includes these other contemplations.[254] Contemplation of feelings, in brief, entails the same kind of clear and continuous awareness of all feelings (*vedanā*) as they arise and pass away as we see applied to the physical awareness of the body below.[255] Contemplation of the mind entails a clear and continuous awareness of one's own states of mind as lustful or not, hateful or not, and so on.[256] Contemplation of mind-objects (*dhamma*) entails "meditation upon" sets of doctrinal categories in various ways, sometimes applying them to the monk's own person, sometimes simply understanding the meaning of the doctrinal schema very thoroughly. The schema so treated are the five hindrances,[257] the five aggregates (*khandha*),[258] the six internal and external sense-bases (*āyatana*),[259] the seven factors of enlightenment (*satta bojjhaṇga*),[260] and

[253] Walshe 336 ff. (numerous times, especially if we expand the ellipses to restore the full redundancy of the oral-formulaic form). I will comment on the interpretation and significance of this formula immediately below.

[254] According to Cox, however, Lin Li-kouang argues that the mindfulness of the body was, at least initially, an independent practice that was only later expanded into the present list of four; Schmithausen, however, disagrees with this thesis, Cox, "Mindfulness and Memory", 69, 90-91 n. 8. I was unable to examine Lin and Schmithausen's arguments myself (for references to which, see n. 251. before the completion of this dissertation.

[255] Walshe 339-340.

[256] Walshe 340.

[257] Sensual desire (*kāmacchandaṃ*), ill-will (*vyāpādo*), "sloth-and-torpor" (*hīnamiddhaṃ*), "worry-and-flurry" (*uddhaccakukkuccaṃ*), and doubt (*vivikicchaṃ*). Walshe 341-342.

[258] Walshe 342.

[259] Walshe 342-343.

the Four Noble Truths.[261] In other words, it is not enough to merely contemplate the body; one must also be aware of one's reactions to physical stimuli (*vedanā*) and one's own states of mind, and one must also understand core doctrine correctly and in application to one's own experience. With this context in place, however, I will concentrate here on the contemplation of the body only, which is also an important limb of this practice; readers further interested in the other categories are referred to the *sutta* itself for details.

As is the case with the other contemplations, contemplation of the body is regularly described in this text as "knowing the body as a body" (*kāye kāyānupassi viharati*, more loosely "observing the corporeality of the body"), in other words, seeing clearly what it is about a body that makes it a body (perhaps rather than pretending it is something else, or ignoring key characteristics of the body). "Contemplating the body [as body", *kāye*] **kāyânupasssanā,* here refers to not just one but a series of meditations, which, after the "contemplation of objects of mind (*dhamma*), occupy the greatest amount of space in the *sutta*. In the sub-sections that follow, we will treat these various contemplations in the order in which they are treated in DN 22, but we shall also note that some of them are attested more widely in the canon.

2.1.3 (a) Mindfulness of breathing (*ānāpanasati*)

The first specific practice described under the rubric of "mindfulness of the body" is mindfulness of breathing. A monk is described as seeking out a secluded spot for meditation, sitting correctly, establishing mindfulness, and watching the breath. The goal described is to know continually and clearly the ongoing state of the breath from moment to moment:

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[260] Mindfulness (*sati*; note that this is the very topic of this entire *sutta*!), "investigation-of-states" (*dhammavicaya*), energy (*viriya*), delight (*pīti*), tranquillity (*passaddhi*), concentration (*samādhi*), and equanimity (*upekkhā*); Walshe 343-344.

[261] Walshe 344-349.

> "Mindfully he breathes in, mindfully he breathes out. Breathing in a long breath, he knows that he breathes in a long breath, and breathing out a long breath, he knows that he breathes out a long breath . . . [the same for a short breath]. He trains himself, thinking: 'I will breathe in, conscious of the whole body.' He trains himself, thinking, 'I will breathe out, conscious of the whole body.' He trains himself, thinking: 'I will breath in, calming the whole bodily process' . . . [and so also on the outbreath]."[262]

This state of focused awareness is compared to the concentration of a skilled turner, who keeps his mind entirely upon his work from moment to moment.

The text then summarises the mechanism that operates throughout this process in a formula that is also repeated throughout the text, for all four of the "foundations of mindfulness": "He abides contemplating body as body internally, externally, and both internally and externally".[263] In the present case, we might take it that the point of this formula is that the meditator gives his attention evenly to both introspective, subjective knowledge of his body as felt "from within" and a more "extrospective", objective knowledge of it through the other ("external") sense-organs, including borderline cases where there is a kind of fusion or grey area between the two.[264]

The result of this process, in this case of the contemplation of the breath, is that the monk

> " . . . abides contemplating arising phenomena (*samudayadhamma*) in the body, he abides contemplating vanishing phenomena (*vayadhamma*) in the body, he abides contemplating both arising and vanishing phenomena in the body (*samudayavayadhamma*). Or else, mindfulness that 'there is body' (*atthi kāyo'ti . . . panassa sati*) is present to him just to the extent necessary for knowledge and awareness (*yāvad eva ñāṇamattāya patissatimattāya*)."

[262] Walshe 335-336.

[263] *ajjhattaṃ vā kāye kāyānupassī viharati, bahiddhā vā kāye kāyānupassī viharati, ajjhattabahiddhā vā kāye kāyānupassī viharati.*

[264] Note, however, that it is more difficult to imagine how such an interpretation of the internal/external distinction might operate with regard to objects of contemplation which are themselves entirely mental, as later in the *sutta*.

In other words, it seems, contemplation of the breath brings about a kind of heightened awareness of all the minute moment-to-moment changes of state in the body, and of those states as constantly in flux; or else the meditator arrives at a state where they maintain a kind of minimal awareness just over the threshold for being aware at all, and the content of that awareness is the simple knowledge that the body exists.

Finally, it is said (as regularly of all contemplations throughout the text, as I mentioned earlier) that the ultimate result of this exercise is that the monk "abides independent, not clinging to anything in the world" (*anissito ca viharati na ca kiñci loke upādiyati*). We will return to this formula, also, below; I will argue there that this state of detached autonomy is not only to be attained through the contemplation of the breath; it is, rather, arguably accomplished gradually, through a series of gradated exercises that lead from this most obvious realm of present sensation to some more propositional content, some of which begins to fade over into the category more properly demarcated by the *dhammânupassanā* prescribed later in the text. Let us briefly examine the other forms in which the meditator "contemplates the body as the body".

2.1.3 (b) Mindfulness in/of the four postures

A monk retains this preternaturally clear awareness of his own body not only in the seated posture he took up for the meditation on the breath, but also when in movement, no matter how "the body is disposed": this is summarised by saying that he is so mindful whether "walking, standing, sitting or lying down", i.e. whichever of the "four postures" he is in.[265]

[265] Walshe 336.

2.1.3 (c) Clear awareness [of every act] (*sampajañña*)

The monk further retains this awareness not only of his basic bodily postures, but of all his physical actions: a longish list is given which is clearly intended to be representative if not exhaustive.[266] In the sequence, I will refer to this meditation, which as we will see features centrally (often independently of the other members of the current rubric) in a wide range of texts, as "clear awareness".

2.1.3 (d) Contemplation of parts of the body, i.e. contemplation of the repulsive (*paṭikkūlamanasikāra*)

The monk is next instructed to "review" (*paccavekkhati*) the entire body "from the soles of the feet upwards and from the scalp downwards", and to inventory all its parts, with an emphasis on their impurity (*asucina*): "head-hairs, body-hairs, nails, teeth, skin, flesh, sinews, bones, bone-marrow, kidneys, heart, liver, pleura, spleen lungs, mesentery, bowels, stomach, excrement, bile, phlegm, pus, blood, sweat, fat, tears, tallow, saliva, snot, synovic fluid, urine."[267] The meditator is described as seeing as clearly these various contents of the body as he would the contents of a bag of various grains.

Note that with the transition from the preceding exercises to this "contemplation of the repulsive", we have departed from the realm of sheer present experiential or physical fact to an order of meditation that is somewhat more imaginative and propositional. It would be difficult, not to say impossible, to experientially verify the physical existence of some of the items on the list prescribed for review here in a state of normal physical health and awareness (how clearly

[266] I.e. going forward or back, looking forward or back, bending, stretching, carrying his robes and bowl, eating, drinking, chewing, savouring, passing excrement or urine, walking, standing, sitting, falling asleep, waking up, speaking and staying silent; Walshe 337.

[267] Walshe 337.

do we usually sense our bone-marrow, or our synovial fluid?), and what is proposed here is thus arguably a process of reminding oneself propositionally of *facts* that one knows to be true of the body, even when they outrun to some extent what is sensually immediate to the direct knowledge of the present subject. The abstract propositional nature of this meditation is betrayed, or at least accompanied, by an imaginative dimension not noted previously – the simile of the bag of grains. When the text has recourse to a metaphor like this to increase the impact or comprehensibility of the meditative content it proposes, we can conclude that it has departed from the realm of what is self-obviously present to ordinary experience.

Alongside this propositional aspect of the meditation, we also observe that there is a certain attitudinal prescription; one is expected not just to observe the factual existence of these body parts, but also the fact that they are "disgusting" or "impure". This emotive response to the facts, it seems, is just as intrinsic to the meditation as the facts themselves. This part of the mindfulness of the body prescribed by the *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna-sutta* has clear affinities with the genre of contemplation of the impurity (of the body). We will return to the discussion of this category in more detail below, as part of our discussion of the "social body" and its deconstruction in the Pāli materials.[268]

In terms of the heuristic distinction we are deploying here between the physical and the social body, it is precisely at this point where the contemplation of the body leaves the realm of sheer given experiential fact that we also begin to broach the territory of the social body. As I observed following Olivelle above, the cultivation of awareness of the body's impurity not only fosters a heightened consciousness of our physical frailty and ultimate mortality, but also undermines the social construction of the body (especially in a generally Brāhmaṇical religious

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[268] See p. 217 ff.

and social context) as a ritually pure symbol of certain social categories and membership therein.

This means, of course, that the distinction between the physical and the social body begins to break down beyond a certain point, and is revealed precisely as a heuristic, rather than a descriptive capture of absolute ontological distinctions in the natural world. We would expect no less of the body, however, inasmuch as it is a prime example of what Mary Douglas calls a "natural" symbol – that is, a symbol that derives much of its significatory power precisely from an ambiguous ontological status, whereby it bridges the usual divide between natural givens and other kinds of stuff more explicitly demarcated as media of signification (sounds of speech, writing, etc.). This same ambiguous status, straddling the borderline between physical and social body, also characterises in lesser degree the meditation on the body as corpse that we will examine below (recall that in Brāhmaṇical codes of purity and defilement, as indeed almost universally, death is a defiling element).[269]

2.1.3 (e) Analysis of the body into four elements (*dhātumanasikāra*)

The next exercise prescribed is even more of an abstract propositional meditation. Here, the meditator is expected to mentally decompose his body into the four elements: earth, water, fire and air.[270] If it is arguably difficult for anyone to ordinarily sense the presence of their kidneys or "mesentery", at least so long as they are healthy and undissected, and if the existence of these body parts is therefore primarily a matter of abstract knowledge, how much more must

[269] Indeed, there may be reason to think that many of the ordinary effluvia of a living, even healthy body are defiling in part because of the associative relation they have, as the by-products and signs of the entropic instability of the body's metabolistic temporality, with eventual death. The wastes the body sheds from moment to moment are, in a sense, merely harbingers of the eventual point when the balance tips from organic viability to dysfunction, and the body in its entirety becomes merely so much waste.

[270] Walshe 338.

this be the case with the elemental composition of the body, which surely are accessible to none short of those with sensory super-powers (and dwelling in a world contrary to modern science).

As with the contemplation of body-parts, this contemplation betrays its more abstract and propositional nature by its recourse to imaginative analogy. In this case, the analogy is of "a skilled butcher or his assistant, having slaughtered a cow" sitting "at a cross-roads with the carcass divided into portions". The violence of this image forms a segue into the outrageous affront on the meditator's narcissistic attachment to his own (living, intact) flesh in the succeeding charnel-ground meditation, where he will be directly instructed to imagine the death and disintegration of his body.

This thread of continuity through the latter three of the six body contemplations brings to our attention an overall arc that structures this part of the meditative curriculum as a whole. In the first half of the curriculum, i.e. the first three contemplations (breath → posture → all activity), the meditator fosters a habitual power to focus totally on the present reality of the body, in all its dimensions. First, by means of the seated breath meditations, this power of focus is learnt with regard to an artificially circumscribed and simplified subset of the overall range of bodily possibilities – breath alone, in a still body, in a quiet secluded environment. This ability is then progressively applied to other postures, and finally to all bodily activity, until the meditator is presumably capable of and habituated to maintaining the same level of continual matter-of-fact awareness of the body and bodily experience in all situations and at all times. The overall effect of this set of practices would be to effectively override any unconscious or habitual tendency to ignore the body or deny its constant presence and our constant dependence upon it. In a sense, then, we might say that this first half of the process is

a process of remedial identification, which repairs any dysfunctional disidentification with the body brought by the candidate to the outset of the meditational process.

In the second half of the curriculum, however, we might say that this thrust is reversed, and the power of this clear and continual awareness of or "proper identification" with the body is leveraged to bring about a thorough (and, in Buddhist terms, functional = salivifically salubrious) *dis*identification with the body. The body and its experience, which has been so ineluctably rendered sensibly present through the development of sheer mindfulness in the first half of the curriculum, is now contemplated through a set of more propositional and imaginative lenses designed specifically to alienate the meditator from it or "estrange" him from it. Where the body is usually regarded as a good, the meditator is encouraged to regard it as an evil (impure and foul). Where the body is usually regarded as an inalienable and integral whole, the meditator is encourage to regard it as a chance collection of random parts (the bag of cereals). Where the body is usually regarded as a special substance, the meditator is encourage to regard it as just so much more of your basic "stuff" (the four elements, as basic as physical matter gets on the classical Indian view). Where the body is usually imagined as a living, precious whole, the meditator is encouraged to imagine it after the model of a disarticulated animal corpse displayed for public sale of its edible meats.

The overall effect of this second half of the curriculum is doubtless intended to be to undo any narcissistic affection for the body, or unrealistic overconfidence in its inalienability and reliability. Where such an operation is undertaken on the basis of a habituated, constant awareness of the physical reality and constant transience of the body, there could further be no hiding in a fiction that the fate of the body is somehow irrelevant to the fate of the meditator,

or disavowal or forgetting of the applicability of those alienating lessons to the person to whom the body is so constantly present and real.

This powerful double trajectory peaks in the sixth and final meditation on the body – the meditation on a rotting corpse in the charnel-ground. We now turn to that meditation.

2.1.3 (f) Mindfulness of death (*maraṇasati*) or "charnel-ground meditations"

The charnel-ground meditation is arguably the climax of the meditation on the body in the *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna-sutta,* and its description takes up more space than any of the other meditations in the body. In this contemplation, the tendency to an increasingly abstract-imaginative-propositional kind of meditation, seen already in the preceding two contemplations, is continued, and for the first time, the meditator is required to take an external aid for his meditation – the corpse of someone already dead, rotting in the charnel-ground. The reason for this is clear: nobody has the opportunity to personally observe (any of their) own corpse(s)[271] rotting away, and so the meditator has to make do with the example provided by someone else, and imaginatively bridge the gap between the rotting exemplar before their eyes and their own case.

In this meditation, the monk is described as considering "a corpse thrown aside in a charnel-ground"[272] in nine successive stages of decomposition. These stages are:

1. "one, two or three days dead, bloated, discoloured, festering";

[271] Where we assume reincarnation and multiple successive lifespans and cadavers.

[272] For our present purposes it does not really matter if the monk is supposed to really be physically present in the charnel ground, or if this is just a meditative conceit.

2. "eaten by crows, hawks or vultures, by dogs or jackals, or various other creatures";
3. "a skeleton with flesh and blood, connected by sinews";
4. "a fleshless skeleton smeared with blood, connected by sinews";
5. "a skeleton detached from the flesh and blood, connected by sinews";
6. "randomly connected bones, scattered in all directions, a hand-bone here, a foot-bone there, a shin-bone here, a thigh-bone there, a hip-bone here, a spine here, a skull there";
7. "the bones whitened, looking like shells";
8. "the bones piled up, a year old";
9. "the bones rotted away to a powder".

At each stage, the meditator "compares his body with that, thinking: 'This body [his own body] is of the same nature, it will become like that, it is not exempt from that fate' (*ayampi kho kāyo evaṃdhammo evaṃbhāvī etaṃ anatīto*)."

The mechanism at work in this practice is described in the familiar terms: "So he abides contemplating body as body internally, externally, and both internally and externally" (*ajjhattaṃ vā kāye kāyānupassī viharati, bahiddhā vā kāye kāyānupassī viharati, ajjhattabahiddhā vā kāye kāyānupassī viharati*). As we saw above, this expression is somewhat cryptic when applied to some of the other contemplations of the body – how do you observe your own breathing "from the outside"? – but in this case, it seems quite natural to understand *bahiddhā* "external(ly)" as referring to the arm of the contemplation that entails the examination of the dead corpse, and *ajjhattam* as referring to the (application of the lessons of the meditation in the mode of) the "internally felt" relation to the body of the meditator himself. The phrase might then be interpreted, in the case of this meditation alone with its external object or

"support" (*ālambana*) of meditation (the corpse), to describe a process of *alternation* between "extrospective", objective knowledge of the observed corpse and introspective, subjective knowledge of the meditator. Such alternation would presumably aim at a state where the two become fused as one – when the meditator "finally contemplates the body as body within just as he does without" (both-internally-and-externally, *ajjhattabahiddhā . . . kāye kāyânupassī viharati*).[273] In other words, the meditator engages in sustained consideration of a dead and rotting person, forcing himself to note and understand the post-mortem process in its full detail and concrete immediacy. At every stage in the process, he is to carefully avoid slipping into abstraction by remembering that the real lesson is that this body he is currently sitting in will unavoidably meet the same fate.

Extending the reading of the overall sequence of contemplations of the body that I began with the previous meditation (on the elements), I suggest that the full force of meditation on the body is only realised with this final step in the process. The meditation on the corpse features here not merely as one of six equal and theoretically separable meditations, all of which might achieve the same equal end, but as the culmination of a dialectical process with its own powerful internal logic. As I argued above, through the course of the first three contemplations, the meditator has already habituated themselves to a constant mindfulness of the presence and susceptibility to change of the present body. Through the fourth and fifth meditations, the meditator begins to leverage this intimate sense of the foundational concrete reality of the body in their experiential world to achieve a kind of alien, disillusioning perspective on the

[273] This interpretation seems to make enough sense to me that I am tempted to think that the formula has its proper application only in cases like the present one, where a split between "objective" and "subjective" modes of knowing the meditational content is possible and a synthesis is therefore to be aimed at. Certainly, I think such a reading is possible for the propositional contents of the (*dhammeṣu*) *dhammânipassanā* considered under the rubric of the fourth "foundation of mindfulness" later in the text. The inclusion of the formula in the earlier parts of the contemplation of the body would just be a result of generalisation of the formula to all the contemplations in the text. This reading is, however, admittedly speculative.

body, whereby it is revealed as disgusting and undesirable. Here, the moral of this story is driven home, and the meditator draws the logical conclusion from these preparatory exercises.

We might summarise the lesson thus: my body is always with me, and a necessary constant condition of all my existence; it is fickle and constantly subject to fluctuation and change; it is gross and base; and it is doomed to die and rot, that is to say, to disintegrate piece by piece in a drawn-out process with which I (the meditator) have become extremely and experientially intimate, and which I have related systematically to my own person.

I think that it is at this stage that the formulaic result claimed for these contemplations becomes convincing and comprehensible. Recall that, as elsewhere throughout the text, the result of this contemplation, also, is that the meditator " abides independent, not clinging to anything in the world" (*anissito ca viharati na ca kiñci loke upādiyati*).[274] In other words, somehow, as a result of these meditations, the meditator attains a state of autonomy (*anissita,* Skt. *aniśrita,* "not depending upon anything"[275]), and is no longer attached to anything in the (entire) world. This detachment obviously includes, first and foremost, detachment from the body. It is difficult (for me at least) to see why mere mindfulness of the breath, for instance, would lead to such a radical detachment. But it is entirely plausible that such a powerful result might follow at the end of the kind of dialectic I am arguing inheres in this meditative curriculum as a whole. If the body has been shown so vividly to be the only and constant vehicle through which one lives in the world, and though which one has access to all other

[274] Walshe 338-339.

[275] Note, in a nice connection to some remote themes in the discourse of embodiment and in this dissertation, that this */śri* is the same verbal root as in *āśraya* "support, basis", used as a term for the body, and key to the concept of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* or "radical transformation of the basis-body", for which see below, Chapter 5.2. We might say that by disidentifying or detaching from the body, here, one becomes "freed from the support or basis" – perhaps even, more liberally, "ungrounded"!

objects of attachment, and if it is further the object of attachment *par excellence*; and if one also carries with one, etched in the core of one's being, the constant awareness that this body is doomed to die and rot (*momento mori*), then it is crystal clear that "all is vanity".[276]

It may not be going too far to say, therefore, that the aim of this series of exercises is also, as with the normative practices prescribed in the monastic regimen with regard to the social body, to "disembody" oneself.[277] The process of detachment and disidentification occasioned here by full awareness of the body's eventual mortal destiny is a process of dislodging, disinvestment or divestment, so that one no longer understands "oneself" (whatever that is) to be significantly "in" the body in the naïve sense we usually assume. As the reduction of the social body to an approximation of zero frees the practitioner from the social body, so too, the divestment aimed at by contemplations of the body frees the meditator from the physical body. In this sense, contemplation of the body, like the effacement of the social body, is a liberation. It seems clear, moreover, from the general detachment promised to sedulous practitioners of the contemplation of the body, that the body is the case of attachment *par excellence;* only detach yourself from it, and you become detached from everything. The centrality of the body to the problematic of suffering, and the solution Buddhism proposes thereto, could hardly be clearer.

As we shall see below, this basic trajectory of liberation following on clear-sighted disillusionment with the radically unsatisfactory nature of the given physical body is also followed in another seminal locus for the early Pāli concept of embodiment – the *Sāmaññaphala-sutta* curriculum of meditation, where it immediately precedes the elaboration of the body

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[276] " Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity;" Ecclasiastes 1:2.

[277] See p. 147 above.

made of mind (*manomayakāya*).[278] We shall also see in the remainder of this chapter that in early Buddhism, it is not only this charnel-ground meditation that presents the salvific as a process of disembodiment, rather than re-embodiment in some more ideal form. Rather, this seems to be the basic tone of all the early materials, and the charnel-ground meditation is thus typical of a very broad pattern.

2.1.3 (cont.) Distribution of this meditation and its component parts in the Pāli canon

Thus far in this section, then, we have examined the presentation of the most developed model of "mindfulness/contemplation of the body" in the Pāli canon, that found in the *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna-sutta.* In order to get a better sense of the various ways the component ideas found in this meditative curriculum feature in the canon as a whole, however, and also of the extent to which these ideas are attested, it is necessary to briefly survey a wide range of other contexts in which they arise. The general rubric of the "four foundations of mindfulness", the notion of "contemplation of the body as body" included in that rubric, and most of the components of the contemplation of the body examined above,[279] are all attested in various guises and permutations elsewhere in the canon, and the overall pattern of these attestations unsurprisingly suggests a complex landscape of various practices, perhaps shifting over time, rather than a single orthopraxy reigning unchanging in all contexts.

We should first note that the entire curriculum as described here is also found in MN 10, *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta,* which is practically identical to the *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna-sutta* in its entirety.[280]

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[278] See below, p. 1427, 260 etc.

[279] With the exception of the analysis of the body into its four elements, which I was unable to find in any context except the elaboration of exactly this model.

[280] Ñāṇamoli 145-155.

We find the same overall model of the contemplation of the body incorporated into a slightly different overall curriculum in MN 119, the *Kāyagatāsati-sutta.* This text begins as *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna-sutta,* progressing through the mindfulness of the breath, postures, full ("clear") awareness, impurity, the four elements in the body, and the charnel-ground contemplation. There, however, the *Kāyagatāsati-sutta* parts company with the *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna-sutta*, and instead describes the meditator attaining the *jhānas.*[281] We should recall that in the classic schema of the eightfold noble path, "right mindfulness" of course precedes "right concentration", so that the idea of mindfulness preparing the ground for the *jhānas* etc. is well-known elsewhere.[282] The *Kāyagatāsati-sutta* then states that mindfulness of the body like this leaves Māra with no point of entry,[283] and describes benefits of mindfulness of the body, which include various kinds of worldly well-being, but also easy mastery of the *jhānas,* supernormal powers and knowledges as per the DN 2 *Sāmaññaphala* model,[284] and then final deliverance.[285]

In addition to these other loci in the canon where we find the entire sixfold contemplation of the body that features in the *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna* as is, we also find much more numerous texts and passages in which one or more of its members feature independently or in partial

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[281] Ñāṇamoli 952-954.

[282] See immediately below, p. 170.

[283] Ñāṇamoli 954-956. Māra is also said to have no entry to one who "dwells having set up mindfulness of the body" in SN 35.243, "Exposition on the Corrupted", Bodhi 1246-1247; SN 47.6, "The Hawk", Bodhi 1633.

[284] This model is examined in more detail below, p. 256.

[285] Ñāṇamoli 956-957.

conjunction. For convenience of exposition, we will examine these in the same order as they feature in the *Mahasatipaṭṭhāna* model, with which we have just familiarised ourselves.

In MN 118, the *Ānāpānasati-sutta,* we find a schema that elaborates in greater detail on the first of the six parts of the *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna* model, the seated meditation on the breath. Having learnt to focus on the bare breath, the monk focuses on tranquillising the bodily formation (*passambhayaṃ kāyasaṇkhāra*), experiencing rapture, pleasure, mental formation (*cittasaṇkhāra*), the mind (*citta*) etc. as he breathes.[286] This exercise is said in and of itself to "fulfil (*paripūreti*) the four foundations of mindfulness",[287] and in particular, "tranquillising the *kāyasaṇkhāra*" is said to be equivalent to "contemplating the body as body": "I say that this is a certain body among bodies, namely, in-breathing and out-breathing."[288]

Further variations on this first member of the *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna* model, mindfulness of the breath, are also found in the *Saṃyuttanikāya,* which includes an entire *saṃyutta* called the *Ānāpanasaṃyutta,* "Saṃyutta on Breathing".[289] Many of the *suttas* found here describe the same basic practices given in the first part of MN 118, and then ring various changes on the results of this practice.

"Clear awareness", the third member of the *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna* model, is described in full (i.e. we see this same pericope verbatim) in a number of places where other parts of the current

[286] Ñāṇamoli 943-944.

[287] Note that this implies that the rubric of the four foundations of mindfulness, labelled as such and considered a desideratum for practice, must already have been in existence at the time of composition of this text, or at least the inclusion in it of this assertion if it is stratified.

[288] *kāyesu kāyaññatarāhaṃ bhikkhave, evaṃ vadāmī: yadidaṃ assāsapassāsā* , Ñāṇamoli 945.

[289] SN 54, Bodhi 1765-1787,

curriculum are missing. This is most notably the case in the seminal model of the path of practice given in DN 2, the *Sāmaññaphala-sutta.* Here, the notion of "contemplating the body as body" is absent, and clear awareness is rather coupled with the idea of being a "guardian of the sense-doors" (*indriyesu guttadvāro*), which seems to mean simply observing sense-data without "grasping at its major signs or secondary characteristics" (*na nimittaggāhī hoti nānubyañjanaggāhī*).[290] This account of clear awareness is naturally repeated where the DN 2 curriculum of practice is repeated, including all *suttas* but the first of the first *vagga* of DN.[291] It is also found in several *suttas* in other *nikāyas,* with minor variations.[292]

The description of "clear awareness" is also found without this context in SN 35.127, "Bhāradvaja", where it is one of the reasons young bhikkhus, "lads with black hair, endowed with the blessing of youth, in the prime of life . . . have not dallied with sensual pleasures, lead the complete and pure holy life all their lives and maintain it continuously";[293] as we will see immediately below, it is paired in this context with the meditation on the body as a collection of unsavoury parts. Similarly, in SN 36.7, "The Sick Ward", clear awareness is specified, in addition to a general description of the four foundations of mindfulness, as a basis for a more extended consideration of *vedanā,* when the Buddha advises sick monks who are dying how best

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[290] Walshe 100.

[291] DN 3 *Ambaṭṭha-sutta,* Walshe 119; DN 4 *Soṇadaṇḍa-sutta,* Walshe 131; DN 5 *Kūṭadanta-sutta,* Walshe 140; DN 6 *Mahāli-sutta,* Walshe 146; DN 7 *Jāliya-sutta,* Walshe 149; DN 8 *Mahāsīhanāda-sutta,* Walshe 155; DN 9 *Poṭṭhapāda-sutta,* Walshe 161; DN 10 *Subha-sutta,* Walshe 173; DN 11 *Kevaddha-sutta,* Walshe 176-177; DN 12 *Lohicca-sutta,* Walshe 184; DN 13, *Tevijja-sutta,* Walshe 194.

[292] MN 27, the *Cūḷahatthipadopama-sutta,* which lays out much the same path of practice and attainment, and there too is accompanied by the description of "guarding the sense-doors", though without the latter term actually being used, Ñāṇamoli 274; so too at MN 38 the *Mahātaṇhāsankhaya-sutta,* which repeats the same description of the path of attainment, Ñāṇamoli 359; so at MN 51 *Kandaraka-sutta,* Ñāṇamoli 450; and at MN 112 *Chabbisodhana-sutta,* which repeats the latter, Ñāṇamoli 907; MN 125 the *Dantabhūmi-sutta,* Ñāṇamoli 994.

[293] Bodhi 1197-1198.

to await their death.[294] The same pairing of the four foundations of mindfulness and clear awareness as an apparently equal and parallel category is found at SN 47.2 "Mindful".[295]

The meditation on the impurity of the body as a collection of parts features elsewhere as the first of a different fourfold rubric of "attainment of vision" (*dassana-samāpatti*); the other "attainments of vision" here are "contemplating the bones covered with skin, flesh and blood", "knowing the unbroken stream of human consciousness (*viññāṇa-sota*) as established in this world and the next", and "knowing the unbroken stream . . . that is not established . . ."[296] In SN 35.127, "Bhāradvaja", the meditation on the body in terms of this list of parts, with no express mention of its impurity, is also credited as one of the reasons that young bhikkhus can live a pure holy life; this is then immediately matched with the practice of "clear awareness", as already mentioned above.[297]

We should also note that the same list of body parts is also distributed between the earth and water elements in a variant description of "mindfulness of breathing" in MN 62, the *Mahārāhulovāda-sutta.*[298] The larger context here is a meditation whereby the meditator reviews the components of the body that belong to each element and notes that there is no self or "mind" in any of them.[299] A truncated version of this same idea seems further to be found in

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[294] Bodhi 1266-1268.

[295] Bodhi 1628.

[296] *Sapasādanīya-sutta,* Walshe 419-420.

[297] Bodhi 1197-1198.

[298] Ñāṇamoli 527-528.

[299] See also MN 140 *Dhātuvibhanga-sutta,* Ñāṇamoli 1089-1091, for the same practice.

another peculiar contemplation found in MN 28 *Mahāhatthipadopama-sutta,*[300] where the body parts are also divided in the same manner between the earth element and the water element, and once more with the idea that self is not to be found in the elements of the body.[301]

In SN 54.9 "At Vesāli", a story is told where the Buddha has taught the meditation on foulness to a group of monks, and many of them become so "repelled, humiliated and disgusted with this body" that they "use the knife", i.e. kill themselves. The Buddha then teaches the meditation on the breath as a remedy to this rather horrendous situation.[302]

Charnel-ground meditations are found in a number of places through the Pāli canon, both in the current context and independently.[303] The sequence occurs at MN 13, *Mahādukkhakkhandha-sutta,* with the twist that the object of meditation in this case is a beautiful woman, and the meditation is introduced precisely as a device to overcome cupidity in male monks.[304] More generally, the sight of decaying corpses on the charnel-ground is sometimes

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[300] Walshe 279.

[301] Ñāṇamoli 279. We will consider this text in a little more detail below.

[302] It is tempting, perhaps, to see in a story that does so little credit to the Buddha or the *saṃgha* a grain of historical truth, and perhaps the origins of the practice of preceding the meditation on foulness with preparatory meditation on the breath as in the *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna* model; any such interpretation, however, would of course be highly speculative, and the story here could equally be an aetiological legend to account for the practice, after the model of Vinaya tales explaining the origin of certain rules, rather than a memory of fact.

[303] E.g. AN 6.3.29, "Above All", Woodward and Hare III, 228-229.

[304] Ñāṇamoli, 183-184. See also e.g. ThiG 469-470, Norman 46; SuN *Vijaya-sutta* 193-200, Saddhatissa 20-21, cited in Khantipalo 21-23.

portrayed as a spur to practice and awakening even where it is not necessarily sought out as a deliberate part of practice.[305]

Finally, in addition to these variations on the individual members of the *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna* model, we also find numerous places in the canon where a general "contemplation of the body as body" is described as part of what appears to be an abbreviated version of the four foundations of mindfulness. This abbreviated description is frequently given when a text wants to specify what is meant by "right mindfulness" as the seventh member of the eightfold noble path, and it is sometimes described in association with an injunction to "be an island unto yourself" and to "be a refuge unto yourself, let the Dhamma be your island, let the Dhamma be your refuge" etc.[306]

In sum, then, these various aspects of contemplation of the body are widespread in the Pāli canon. The very variety of these practices, as surveyed in the preceding paragraphs, is indicative of their centrality in Buddhist practice in the period represented by these texts; a tradition would not expend so much creative energy on a marginal concern. Mindfulness of the body is further intimately bound up with some of the most seminal Buddhist practices and

[305] ThaG 393-398, " Kulla", Norman 42, cited in Khantipalo 57; in one rather harrowing case, the meditator only learns the salutary lesson after being tempted to necrophiliac intercourse with the corpse, ThaG 315-319, "Rājadatta", Norman 36.

[306] DN 18, the *Janavasabha-sutta,* Walshe 298; DN 26, *Cakkavatti-sīhanāda-sutta,* Walshe 395, 404; DN 33, the *Saṅgīti-sutta,* Walshe 487; DN 34, *Dasuttara-sutta,* Walshe 514; MN 51 the *Kandaraka-sutta,* Ñāṇamoli 444; MN 77 the *Mahāsakuludāyi-sutta,* Ñāṇamoli 636; MN 141 *Saccavibhanga-sutta,* Ñāṇamoli 1100-1101; SN 43.12, "The Unconditioned", Bodhi 1375; SN 45.8 "Analysis", Bodhi 1529; SN 47.1 "Ambapāli", Bodhi 1627, and a number of times throughout SN 47 the *Satipaṭṭhānasaṃyutta* or "Saṃyutta on Mindfulness". At SN 47.3, "A Bhikkhu", an abbreviated version of the four foundations is given that explicitly rings the changes on internal, external, and internal-and-external; Bodhi 1629. *Mahāparinibbāna-sutta* includes a brief mention of "contemplating the body as body", without any details, and also "clear awareness", which is described in full with the same wording as here; Walshe 242. A little later, the Tathāgata once more instructs monks to so "contemplate the body as body" as part of his instructions that they be "as islands unto themselves"; Walshe 245.

the realisation of some of Buddhism's most vaunted ideals. Mindfulness of the body, as in the *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna-sutta,* is described as leading to complete release from attachment to the world (along with the other three foundations of mindfulness). "Right mindfulness", is a member of the eightfold Noble Path, and seems most to equate to mindfulness of the body as these texts describe it. Finally, it is also described in many places as a key component of the preparation for the *jhānas* etc., which lead in quite short order to the attainment of supernatural powers and knowledge and final liberation.

All of these features of the practice of mindfulness of the body indicate the centrality of the given body, and our ordinary relation to it, to the overall problematic Buddhism sets out to address. Further indication of the deeply problematic nature of given embodiment is to be found in the fact that the goal of these practices is frequently dissociation or disidentification from the body. As I already observed above, it is accurate to describe these practices, like the deconstruction of the social body in the monastic regimen, as aiming ultimately at a kind of disembodiment.

2.1.4 Dates

In Appendix 1.1, I summarise in detail the evidence presented by major secondary works on the dating of materials relevant to the ideas about ordinary given physical and social embodiments surveyed in this section (Ch 2.1 as a whole). To summarise very briefly, I conclude that the overall pattern of the evidence suggests that it is most plausible to hold that the ideas surveyed here all date back to an earlier phase of the Pāli-canonical period. Readers interested in the details of my reasons for assigning such relative dates to these materials are referred to the Appendix.

On the basis of these conclusions about the dating of these materials, therefore, we can now turn to some summary statements about the status of the given body in early Pāli Buddhism.

2.1.5 Summary: given embodiments in early Buddhism

The evidence surveyed thus far in this section shows us that from as close as we can probe to its inception, Pāli Buddhism saw the given *physical* body, and the failures it was prone to, as an epitome of the problem of suffering. It was also highly suspicious of given *social* embodiment, and instituted a concerted set of practices to "deconstruct" that embodiment and steadfastly avoid erecting any kind of substitute social person in its place. It also incorporated a range of practices that sought clear and constant awareness of the body's present changeability (clear awareness) and its future mortality (charnel-ground meditations). It sought, by the cultivation of awareness of the body's status as "ordinary stuff", to help the practitioner thoroughly disidentify from the body and thereby overcome one of the most pernicious forms of mistaken belief in a "self" (body-part and element analysis as a prototypical antidote to *sakkāya*).

I intend that the ideas gathered here are representative of all the significant ideas on the subject of given embodiment that can be traced relatively early in the Pāli materials. In these materials, given embodiment is viewed in an overwhelmingly negative light. This negative view of given embodiment applies equally to physical and social embodiment, and can be seen in both descriptive characterisations of ordinary given embodiments themselves, and also as the shadow image of normative practices and doctrines that seek to alter the body, or at least to alter "embodiment" in the sense that to be embodied is to have a relation to a body.

Thus, the physical body as a "suffering substance", to recall Lingis's suggestive phrase, is unsurprisingly envisaged as a central site of where the problem of suffering is encountered. It

is susceptible to immediate and excruciating pain of various kinds, which are inventoried in grim detail. It is also heir to decay and death, as summarised in the formula of "(re-)birth, old age, sickness and death" and various permutations or subsets thereof.[307] The body is also a site of danger in that it is usual to enter into a pernicious relation with the body, whereby we identify self as, of, or in the body, and this mistaken identification of the body with self (*sakkāyadiṭṭhi*) is a further source of grave and chronic suffering.

Already with *sakkāya* doctrine and its prototypes, we broach the field of normative doctrines that seek to change embodiment in some sense. The texts not only describe the wrong-headed attitude that leads to suffering, but also prescribe a replacement understanding that is promised to lead to liberation. When we turn to the attitude shown by the texts to ordinary given social embodiment, however, we find ourselves dealing almost entirely with normative materials, where the descriptive nature of the problem must be inferred from prescriptions seeking to remedy it.

The Buddhist monastic regimen, I have argued, is best interpreted as intended primarily to harness the power of social structures to construct a "social body", that is, a body signifying the values and norms of the social group, but to use that power to the paradoxical end of "deconstructing" the ordinary given social body. This project is undertaken not in order to erect a superior social body in place of the ordinary social body, but rather, in order to strip the person of the monk of anything answering to the label of "social body" at all. I further argued that the reason Buddhism sets out to achieve this deconstruction of the social body is that the values that inscribe the ordinary given social body are all predicated upon a vision of existence in the world as an axiomatic good. Buddhism, by contrast, is founded upon the perception that

[307] We will see further below that the mirror image of this vision of the problematic nature of the body found powerful expression in a widespread vision of the religious ideal as a state of undying.

the world is merely a theatre of suffering, and rejects this underlying set of values. We noted that the paradoxical use of the engine of social construction against the grain of social imperatives is a feature of monasticism that puts it in stark contrast to the individual, wilderness-dwelling, unkempt, dreadlocked, naked model of the ascetic, which is taken as normative for Indian asceticism by Olivelle.

We saw further in this section that the body of the ideal monastic, as envisaged in the texts, is in a loose sense the first place we encounter an ideal body in the Buddhist tradition. This body is only ideal in a limited and paradoxical sense. Its ideal status is limited because the deconstruction of the social body is not an end unto itself, but merely a means to a further end of undoing all entanglement in the world, which must ultimately go beyond the social to disidentify the monastic from his or her physical embodiment also. To this end, the monastic deconstruction of the social body merely clears the ground in preparation for that more radical project of divestment from the body. The monastic body is further an "ideal body" only in a paradoxical sense because, insofar as it is apt to describe it as a body at all, it is a body which enacts symbolically the notion of bodi*less*ness, and a body that intends not to be a body is only a "body" in a very peculiar sense, if at all.

The final set of ideas and practices we examined was the set of practices known collectively as "mindfulness of the body". Here, too, we were also on almost entirely normative ground, and could only infer a descriptive characterisation of the problem at issue. Here we encounter a range of practices that seem to be designed to inculcate in the meditator the capacity to remain continually and fully aware of physical bodily experience throughout conscious life (the first three practices through to "clear awareness"); to impress upon the meditator the fact that the body is merely so much physical stuff like any other "thing" (analysis in terms of elements); to

make the meditator conscious of the impure and disgusting nature of the body and thereby break down any narcissistic affection he might have for the body (the meditation on impurity); and to bring home as a concrete and present reality the inevitability of the body's eventual death and complete decay (corpse contemplation). We can infer from the felt need to prescribe these normative practices that the authors of these practices perceived the following problems in the ordinary relation to the physical body: first, a blindness to its actual changeability or even its constant existence moment to moment (mindfulness of the body); second, a narcissistic attachment to the body that leads us to regard the body as special (vs. "so much stuff") and delightful (vs. disgusting and impure); third, a blindness to its mortality and a consequent failure to fully realise that we ourselves will eventually die. We can further infer, in tandem with the lessons of *sakkāya* doctrine, that the goal of these practices is a disidentification with the physical body, such that its fate no longer determines or impinges upon our well-being and felicity.

Running through all these different dimensions of the early Buddhist attitude towards given embodiment, in addition to the negative characterisation of given embodiment *per se,* is the normative goal of disentangling oneself from the body as a significant component of the progress towards the ultimate religious goal. We are to become equanimous in the face of present or prospective suffering; to deconstruct and leave behind the social body; to be constantly and fully mindful of the fallible, transient, and mortal nature of the flesh; and to disidentify from any form of embodiment, physical or social, as the self. I believe that it is apt to characterise this goal, in the various dimensions we have seen it here, in terms of "disembodiment". In light of the fact that the usual view of ordinary embodiment is so negative, and also that the normative goal is envisaged in terms of the radical abandonment of embodiment as such, it is all the more remarkable that Buddhism was to eventually come

around to the idea that Buddhahood could indeed be embodied fully and perfectly in the various *buddhakāya.*

Before we can begin tracing the meandering and eventful path that led to such doctrines, however, we must first survey a set of ideas that distantly foreshadow one facet of the ideal embodiment of the Buddha eventually elaborated in the Mahāyāna, namely, the idea that the Buddha's body is immortal. We are a long way yet from such ideas in such a concrete form. Nonetheless, the characterisation of the religious ideal as a state of "undying" is very widespread in early Buddhist materials. Given that death is the epitome of the various frailties and failures that flesh is heir to, the discourse of undying is one more normative set of ideas in whose shadow we can discern the descriptive identification of the body as central to the problematic of suffering. The discourse of undying therefore forms a useful bridge between the problem of the given body and the history of ideal embodiments elaborated as compensations for that problem.

Chapter 2.2 Conquest of or escape from death ("undying") as a soteriological goal in the Pāli canon

"Who wants to live forever?"
--- Freddy Mercury (1946-1991)[308]

We now turn to the examination of the theme of *amata* (Skt. *amṛta*), i.e. "immortality", "ambrosia" or "the Deathless" (the translation preferred by e.g. Thanissaro Bhikkhu or K. R. Norman), as it is found in a very large number of passages in the Pāli canon. We will also examine other features of early Buddhism that I consider related to this theme, which we can consider under the broader head of the "conquest or escape from death".

As Patrick Olivelle notes, Sanskrit *amṛta,* to which *amata* is merely the Pāli cognate, is not immediately transparent in the relation of its morphology to its meaning:

> "The Sanskrit term for 'immortal' and 'immortality' is *amṛta*. It consists of *mṛta,* which is the past participle of the verbal root /*mṛ* = to die, with the negative prefix *a.* This is a somewhat curious formation, because theoretically it should mean 'not dead' rather than 'non-dieable' or 'immortal', which in Sanskrit should be *amartya*. Negated past participles, however, tend to have an 'un-Xable' rather than an 'un-Xed' meaning, and the former is the primary meaning of *amṛta*."[309]

In light of these facts about its semantics, I will below use the English word "undying" to convey the notion of a state that is not destined for death. Strictly speaking, of course, that is what is meant by the English word "immortal", where "mortal" means "destined for death"; but it seems to me that prior translators and scholars are right in their apparent intuition that the word "immortal" carries too many connotations of a certain kind of prolonged personal existence in the empyrean to be of use in discussing the very different Buddhist notion at issue

[308] Queen, *A Kind of Magic* (EMI/Hollywood Records, 1986); eponymous song titled after a line of dialogue from the film *Flash Gordon,* dir. Mike Hodges (Universal Pictures, 1980).

[309] Olivelle, "*Amṛtā*", 428. In his n. 2, p. 445, Olivelle acknowledges Stephanie Jamison for the expressions "un-Xable" and un-Xed", and uses the example of *adhṛṣṭa* "undareable-against" to show that this relation between morphology and similar semantics is not unique to *amṛta*.

here. On the other hand, there is no other English term whose morphology and semantics match a normal Indic gerundive like Sanskrit *martya* "fit-for-death", "destined-for-death", from which we could coin an English negative that would do the job of labelling a notion of "that which is not amenable to death/given to die", or a *state* not tending or susceptible to death. The translation "deathless", however, which Thanissaro and some other scholars have favoured as an *ad hoc* solution to these same difficulties, seems to me to be morphologically far enough from *amata* that it is somewhat misleading. It suggests a thing or state in which a nominal "death" (which would rather correspond to *mara* or *maraṇa* in our Indic languages) is absent, rather than a state in which, or something to which, death *will not happen.* In these circumstances, I will have to ask my reader to allow "undying" to do the job, and to bear in mind that by it, I am referring by a kind of shorthand to all the considerations laid out in this brief treatment of the meaning of the term *amṛta*. I will variously use "undying" adjectivally and speak nominally of "the undying" or simply "undying", as the context seems to demand in order to produce coherent English. I will not, however, alter the translations of other scholars from whom I quote.

As it is found in these early Buddhist materials, the theme of *amata/amṛta,* and the related broader theme of conquest of or escape from death, does not bear directly on discourses about embodiment *per se.* It is therefore necessary for me to say a few words to justify the fact that I have expended so much attention on it in this dissertation. I have done so for two main reasons.

First, as I hope the considerations I have just outlined above show (Ch. 2.1), early Buddhist discourse about the body is most preponderantly and emphatically about the unsatisfactory nature of the ordinary received ("*saṃsāric*") body. Embodiment in such a form, even if it does

not quite constitute the whole existential and religious problem to which Buddhist proposes its solution, is an excellent synecdoche for and even the epitome of that problem. The problem with the body, further, as we have seen, is that it is corruptible – that it is heir to corruption, disease, degeneration, and death. Death is arguably the *sine qua non* of this group of related deficiencies in the flesh; it is insofar as they tend ultimately to death that the other related problems of corruption, disease and degeneration are also problematic. For this reason, the large and ramified discourse of escape from or conquest of death that is found in early materials is, I believe, intimately related to the problem represented by ordinary embodiment.

Second, however, we will see that in later periods Buddhism does contain very explicit discourse about bodily longevity and even immortality. I will argue later in this dissertation that such ideas about bodily longevity and immortality comprise an important and thus far entirely neglected thread in the overall history of Buddhist discourse about ideal embodiments. None of the talk in the early materials is about *amata* understood in any corporeal sense, but the early discourse clearly comprises an important background for the introduction of more corporeal notions of immortality in later Buddhism. If we did not have the extensive early discourse about *amata* in view, it would be too easy to fall into a mistaken interpretation of the later materials as the interpolation into Buddhist contexts of doctrines that were entirely alien to them. When we examine the later developments toward discourse about corporeal immortality in light of the early materials, however, it becomes clear that those discourses found fertile ground in very old Buddhist notions about the soteriological ideal.

2.2.1 Indo-European, Vedic and Upaniṣadic background or parallels to the notion of *amata/amṛta*

It is important that we note, before wading into the Buddhist evidence, that the concept of *amṛta* was of course not a new Buddhist invention, but was rather a part of a broad heritage of Indian religious ideas that formed the context within which early Buddhism was elaborated.[310] In the case of *amṛta,* in fact, this heritage stretches back even to the Indo-European forerunners of Vedic religiosity, where there existed ancestral ideas from which were descended not only Indic *amṛta* but also the Greek "ambrosia", etc.[311] It then finds quite extensive expression in various components of Vedic religion, including the very earliest *Ṛg-veda* materials. It is neither possible nor, mercifully, necessary for me to attempt any thorough study of this old motif here.[312] I will give only a few examples of themes that will be pertinent to our later discussion, drawn almost entirely from the *Ṛg-veda* alone.

The Vedic gods are understood to be immortal,[313] but not to have always been so; they gained immortality in the mythological past.[314] Among the gods, however, Agni (the god of fire) has a

[310] On the Vedic and Upaniṣadic background of conceptions of immortality as related to the Buddhist case, see also Nakaso Issei, 45-51.

[311] See Paul von Thieme, "Ambrosia", in Rüdiger Schmitt, ed., *Indogermanische Dichtersprache,* Wege der Forschun Band CLXV (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Budhgesellschaft, 1968), 113-132.

[312] A good *entrée* to some dimensions of *amṛta* in Vedic materials can be found in the second chapter of Jan Gonda's *Change and Continuity in Indian Religion,* entitled "Soma, Amṛta and the Moon".

[313] In numerous Vedic passages the word "immortal" occurs merely as a passing epithet of the gods. See for example 10.16.8, Doniger 50; 1.35, Doniger 198; Rudra, 1.114, Doniger 224; 10.10, Doniger 247; Agni, 1.26.9, Doniger 10; Agni, 4.5.2, Doniger 113; 5.2.12, Doniger 103; the Dawns are "wives of immortality", 4.5.13, Doniger 115; Agni, 1.26.9, Oldenberg 13; Agni "the strength-begotten immortal", I.58.1, Oldenberg 45; the Uśijs are immortal *amṛtyu,* 3.2.9., Oldenberg 229; 5.57.5 the Maruts, i.e. Storm-Gods, "these singers of the sky, have obtained their immortal name", Müller 340; 1.166.3, Müller 209; 1.166.13, Müller 210; 5.57.8, Müller 341; 10.121.2, Müller 1 etc.

[314] RV 1.72.1, Oldenberg 82; the gods guard their immortality by holding onto Agni, RV 1.96.6, Oldenberg 119-120. See also *Śatapathabrahmana* 2.2.2.14, cited in Olivelle, "*Amṛtā*" 435.

particularly close association with *amṛta*,[315] being said in mythological passages to have won it,[316] and also a key intermediary through whom sacrificing worshippers can hope to gain it in their turn.[317] We also note that on occasion there are associations of certain kinds of knowledge with immortality, and in particular, of knowledge of sacred writ and the Vedic metres.[318] Moreover, as Olivelle has shown (following Thieme), the term *amṛta* in these materials has a broad range of meanings, including not just living forever or absolute escape from death, but also anything opposed to death, i.e. all that is vital or supports life: it is applied in the Vedic

[315] See e.g. RV 1.31.7, Oldenberg 23; RV 1.72.1, Oldenberg 82; RV 5.2, on the birth of Agni, where a priest says of the young Agni that "I gave him the ambrosia that sets one free", Doniger 102; RV 5.4.10, Oldenberg 376; RV 6.9, "the guardian of immortality", Doniger 116; also 3.1.14 (v. cryptic); 3.23.1, Agni has assumed immortality; 3.25.2, Agni obtains powers and strength for his worshipper, "being busy for the sake of immortality"; 5.3.4, the gods "assuming many powers attach themselves to immortality"; 5.28.2. Agni, kindled, "reignest over immortality"; 1.71.9, the ambrosia is in the cows and watched over by Mitra and Varuṇa; 3.26.7, Agni has ghee as his eye, and (the drink of) immortality in his mouth.

[316] See particularly RV 10.51, where Agni is, in one version of the myth, coaxes from the waters by a bribe that will have him change places with Yama, sending Yama to the world of the dead in his place, Doniger 109 n. 6; Agni has hidden in the waters because he does not want the role of oblation-giver, and the gods make him this offer: "We will make your life-span free of old age, O Agni, knower of creatures, so that you will not be harmed when you have been harnessed. Then you will carry the portion of the offering to the gods with a willing heart," v. 7; Agni agrees: "Let the life-span of Agni be long, O gods," v. 8, Doniger 108-109; see also 10.124, where Agni is similarly lured away from his hiding place inside the *asura* Vṛta, and says, "Secretly going away from the non-god (*asura*), being a god and seeing ahead I go to immortality," Doniger 110. Also RV 6.9, where he is called "the immortal light among mortals," "This is the one who was born and firmly fixed, the immortal growing great in his body, Doniger 116.

[317] See e.g. RV 5.4.10, where Agni is called on to bestow all sorts of blessings, including this invocation: "When I, the mortal, call thee, the immortal, thinking of thee with humble mind, bestow glory on us, O Gātavedas; may I attain immortality, O Agni, with all my offspring," Oldenberg 376. Note, however, that other gods are also sometimes asked to bestow immortality, especially the Maruts: RV 5.55.4, Müller 333; RV 7.57.6, Müller 379; so also Rudra, RV 7.59.12, Müller 387; Vāta, 10.186.3, Müller 451; Pamavāna, RV 9, cited in Rhys Davids, "Original Buddhism and Amṛta", 371-372, without further reference.

[318] See e.g. the highly cryptic RV 1.164.23-25, where only those who gain immortality have knowledge about certain metres. Similarly, see 4.58, where clarified butter is envisaged as sometimes taking the form of the perfected speech in the heart of the poet, and the secret name of butter is "tongue of the gods", "navel of immortality", Doniger 126; cf. (the later) *Śathapathabrahmaṇa* 10.5.2.3, cited by Coomaraswamy, *Yakṣas* 29, for the doctrine that the knower "he himself becometh Death" (*mṛtyur asyātmā bhavati*), the "Death who does not die".

texts to "objects from clarified butter, gold, and the Soma drink to food, water, semen, sons and gods".[319]

In the Upaniṣads, if anything, *amṛta* becomes an even more central concern, and features in extremely numerous passages. Incidentally to his main purpose in his excellent article considering the salvific possibilities for women in this period entitled "*Amṛtā*", Patrick Olivelle has provided an excellent summary of doctrines of immortality in this broad body of texts. He studies a series of different "technologies" of immortality,[320] which he plots along the lines of a rough chronological development, while emphasising that the chronology is not tidy and, following Dumont, that these various "stages" are probably in an aggregational rather than a substitutive relation to one another.[321] Thus, the earliest model seems to be one where it is possible to gain immortality for the husband only through the son, where a wife features as a purely instrumental means to this end.[322] The next model to appear seems to be immortality as long life, which is acquired by ritual means and therefore requires worldly wealth, and leads to accession to the heavens of the gods (who themselves likewise *became* immortal).[323] The last major model to appear, which Olivelle identifies with the period of urbanisation, the irruption of renunciate models of practice and their attendant discourses, etc., we see the rise of an idea of immortality as *mokṣa.*[324] This is, of course, the period in which Buddhism also arose, and

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[319] Olivelle, "*Amṛtā*", 428. It should be noted that this is only a minor point among the many interesting things Olivelle has to say in this article.

[320] Olivelle gives a useful diagram summarizing the ideas traced in this argument and their mutual relations, 431.

[321] Olivelle 442.

[322] Olivelle 431-434.

[323] Olivelle 434-437.

[324] Olivelle 437-442.

ideas of immortality as, or attained via, *mokṣa* thus are the immediate background against which we must understand the ideas we will examine below from the Pāli canon.[325]

Toshifumi Gotō has compared the doctrines regarding realisation of the self and its benefits found in the "Yājñavalkya-Kāṇḍa" of the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-Upaniṣad* and early Buddhist ideas.[326] At BU 4.4.29-31, the *ātman* is said to be *ajára-* "unageing", *amára-* "undying", *amṛ́ta-* "immortal" and *abháya-* "unfearing".[327] Gotō suggests that despite their apparent synonymy, *amára-* and *amṛ́ta-* here in fact have different meanings: *amára-* merely means that "someone alive does not die on earth", but *amṛ́ta-* "that there is no (more) death at all".[328] *Amára* is, apparently, "not attested anywhere else in Vedic literature".[329] Of *amṛ́ta*, Gotō notes, "That is the overcoming of *punar-mṛtyú,* i.e. repeated death in a heavenly world resulting in rebirth on earth, and consequently the transcendence of Saṃsāra . . . . This is not only the very idea pursued in the Vedic religion since the Brāhmaṇa period, but also what is sought after by Gotama Buddha and his disciples under the name of Nirvāṇa (Pāli *nibbāna-*) 'perfect annihilation'."[330] Gotō concludes that there

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[325] I have followed what I understand to be the traditional scholarly consensus that some Upaniṣads, at least, including AU and BU, were composed before the time of the Buddha. However, a minority strand of opinion seems to hold that even BU, for example, and in particular the Yājñavalkya materials from which I cite relatively frequently in this dissertation, may actually post-date Buddhism. See Nakamura, *A History of Early Vedānta*, 10-; Nakamura cites e.g. Hopkins and Rapson suggesting that Upaniṣads may actually post-date the Buddha, 13. Nakamura argues that KaU is later than some Buddhist texts, 19-27. He then takes this as a "foundation stone in the determination of the dates of the Upaniṣads", 28, and on this basis argues that ŚvU, *Maitrāyaṇa-U* and *Maṇḍūkya-U* are also later. All this enables him to say about those Upaniṣads established by linguistic research to be even earlier than KaU, however, is that the absence of Buddhist influence is a striking problem; he notes that we cannot on that basis alone conclude that they were necessarily earlier than the Buddha, 30-31.

[326] Gotō, "Yājñavaklya's Characterization of the Ātman . . ."

[327] Gotō 74.

[328] Gotō 80.

[329] Gotō 80-81.

[330] Gotō 80.

is a relatively close relation between the four kinds of suffering from which realisation of *ātman* delivers us on the BU Yājñavalkya model and the Buddhist *jāti-jara-vyādhi-maraṇa,* "birth, age, sickness and death".[331] On Gotō's argument, then, the "Yājñavalkya-Kāṇḍa" provides a particularly close antecedent (or perhaps parallel) to the Buddhist doctrine of *amṛta/amata,* and we would expect, on that basis, that the emphasis in Buddhist doctrine would likewise be on "undying" as an escape from death as synecdoche for the whole problematic of *saṃsāra,* and not on escape from the physical death of this given physical body. As we shall see, this indeed turns out to be the case.

Against this broad background, I will only mention briefly a few more specific passages and doctrines from the Upaniṣadic material that present us with particularly salient points of comparison with the following Buddhist material.[332] There is a very marked increase in emphasis in the Upaniṣadic materials on particular kinds of arcane religious knowledge as the privileged means of access to *amṛta;*[333] the analogy to the gnostic character of the path to liberation in Buddhism is obvious. In a perhaps related theme, immortality is often held, as in early Vedic material, to stem from knowledge or performance of, or a particular relation to,

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[331] Gotō 81-85.

[332] In the case of these Upaniṣadic materials, I was of course even less able to afford the time for exhaustive study than I was for the Buddhist materials, and a thorough study of these ideas would surely also serve as a rewarding topic for future research.

[333] See, for example, *Bṛhadāraṇyakôpaniṣad* (BU) 1.2.7, where those who know the origins of the horse sacrifice in death, and the identity between the sun, an earthly fire, the horse sacrifice, and death, "averts repeated death (*punarmṛtyu*) – death is unable to seize him . . .", Olivelle, *Upaniṣads* 9, cf. ŚB 10.5.2.3, cited above n. 318; BU 1.4.6, where one is immortal who knows the cosmogonic narrative whereby Puruṣa produced fire and Soma, i.e. eater and food, from his own mouth and semen, Olivelle 14; the true knowledge of the self (*ātman*) assures the knower of immortality, BU 4.4.12-17, Olivelle 66-67; *Chāndogyôpaniṣad* (CU) 2.10.1-6, where knowledge of the true power of the Sāman vouchsafes immortality; CU 4.15.1, Olivelle 124-125; CU 8.3.4-5, Olivelle 169; *Kathôpaniṣad* (KaU) 6.8, Olivelle 245. Kumoi Shōzen relates this Upaniṣadic importance of gnostic insight in winning immortality to Buddhist materials; Kumoi 77.

sacred language,[334] just as in early Buddhist contexts liberation (frequently characterised as *amata*) flows from knowledge of the Dhamma. Within the context of the extremely frequent Upaniṣadic theme of correspondences between the body as microcosm and cosmos as macrocosm, immortality is said to be located in particular functions or organs of the body as it is in certain foci of sacred power in the cosmos at large, especially the breath, which corresponds to the wind;[335] this provides a remote analogy with the fact that in early Buddhist discourse,[336] certain kinds of knowledge of or about the body are a royal road to a soteriological goal also characterised as *amata*. It is also important for us to note, of course, that immortality is often predicated of the Upaniṣadic *ātman*, or, to put it another way, *ātman* is figured as the subject of immortality.[337] The attainment of immortality is, importantly for our purposes, associated with the abolition or transcendence of desire.[338] It is also noteworthy that, as in

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[334] See e.g. BU 1.3.28, where the singing of praise to the Sāman is accompanied silently by the appeal for immortality, Olivelle 12-13; CU 2.10.1-6, where the Sāman is praised as "leading beyond death", Olivelle 111-112; CU 2.22.2, Olivelle 115-116; CU3.1-5, where the world is compared to a beehive of the gods, the bees being Vedic verses, and the flowers each of the four Vedas, related to the four cardinal directions respectively, each time with the refrain "they are the immortal waters", Olivelle 120. See also the remarkable, almost psychedelic CU 1.4.4, where the gods, afraid of death, enter the triple Veda, but death can still see them there "like a fish in water", so they emerge again therefrom and enter the sound of the OṂ; "So, when one finishes a Ṛg verse, or a Sāman chant, or a Yajus formula, one makes the sound OṂ. This syllable – the immortal and the fearless – is that very sound. Upon entering that syllable, the gods became immortal and free from fear. A man who utters this syllable with that knowledge enters this very syllable, the sound that is immortal and free from fear. As the gods became immortal by entering it, so will he;" Olivelle 101.

[335] BU 1.5.21, Olivelle 21-22; BU 1.6.3, Olivelle 22-23; see also BU 2.3.1-5, discussed in a little more detail below for its association of the idea of immortal breath with an idea of two "forms". At BU 3.7.2-3, wind is paired not with breath but with *ātman*. At BU 5.15 the wind alone is characterised as immortal, without the pairing being made with the breath, Olivelle 78-79.

[336] I am thinking here particularly of the discernment of the dissatisfactory, corruptible nature of the received, corruptible body, for which see below.

[337] See the famous dialogue between Yājñavalkya and Maitreyī on the topic, BU 4.5.3-15, Olivelle 69-71, also cited by Nishi as a part of the Upaniṣadic background to (and point of contrast for) Buddhist ideas; CU 4.15.1, Olivelle 124-125; CU 8.3.4-5, Olivelle 169. Cf. also the description of the "person" who roams in another world via the intermediary realm of dreams, BU 4.3.11-14, Olivelle 59-60.

[338] BU 4.4.7, Olivelle 65; this verse is rightly cited by Kumoi as a precedent for the Buddhist understanding that *amata* is attained by the vanquishing of desire, Kumoi 77; so also KaU 4.14-15, Olivelle 246, Kumoi 77.

some Buddhist contexts, the attainment of knowledge that grants immortality is associated with the banishment of fear;[339] we should also note that it is also sometimes knowledge of or the relation to *brahman* in particular that vouchsafes immortality,[340] a fact of significance in light of the continued power and resonance of the term *brahman* in early Buddhist contexts.

Of particular interest as a suggestive if distant precedent for Buddhist notions not only of immortality but also of embodiment is BU 2.3.1-5, where we see that *brahman* has two "forms" (*rūpa*, also translatable in some contexts as "body"), one visible and the other invisible,[341] the latter being immortal. In the Upaniṣadic case, the immortal, invisible *rūpa* is wind in the macrocosmic case and breath in the microcosm, as we saw above is the case in other passages.[342] I would not want to exaggerate the proximity of this notion to anything found in Buddhism, especially in early Buddhism, where, as we will see below, *amata/amṛta* is never associated directly with embodiment of any kind, and where we do not find breath identified as any kind of subject of immortality or key site of soteriological potential. Nonetheless, it is

339 BU 4.4.25, Olivelle 68; CU 8.3.4, Olivelle 169; etc.

340 This is, of course, unremarkable given the fact that *ātman* is also associated with immortality, and the frequently posited Upaniṣadic identity between *ātman* and *brahman.* See, for example, CU 2.23.1, "The person who is steadfast in *brahman* reaches immortality", Olivelle 116; CU 8.3.4-5, Olivelle 169;.

341 Note that e.g. in DN 1 we do find formulations in Buddhism which seem to admit of an interpretation whereby the Buddha, after the breakup of his physical body, in some sense continues to "exist" (with appropriate caveats admitting explicitly formulating it thus would be unacceptable to Buddhist discourse) but is invisible: "The outward form, brethren, of him who has won the truth, stands before you, but that which binds it to rebirth is cut in twain. So long as his body shall last, so long do gods and men behold him. On the dissolution of the body, beyond the end of his life, neither gods nor men shall see him;" Rhys Davids I, 54; Walshe 90. If someone simply does not exist (and of course it is an equal heresy in Buddhism to say that the Tathāgata, after physical death, *does not* "exist"), it would arguably not make much sense to make a fuss of the fact that he "cannot be seen"; this fact can only be remarkable if "there is something there" that is nonetheless not seen.

342 Olivelle 27. I suspect that Lindtner must be referring to this passage when he says that BU 4.3 is an antecedent to the Buddhist duality of *dharmakāya* and *rūpakāya* (*sic*; as we will see below, I am not sure there is any text that ever posits embodiment in the exact form of such a twofold distinction); Lindtner, "From Brahmanism to Buddhism", 7. Lindtner conveniently gives the Sanskrit: *dve vāva Brahmaṇo rūpe mūrtañ caivāmūrtañ ca martyañ cāmṛtañ ca.*

striking that this passage combines the idea of liberation from the bonds of death with the idea of multiple possible forms or embodiments, as do some much later Buddhist ideas that we will examine later in this dissertation.[343]

As even such a brief survey shows, the theme of *amṛta* and access to it in various forms was a major theme in Indian religious discourse up to and at the time Buddhism was first elaborated, and was a topic on which there was a rich profusion of varying and even contesting views. It is unsurprising, then, coming as it did into such a context and given its known proclivity for appropriating and radically recasting the notions of brahmanic and *śramaṇera* discourse, that early Buddhism would make extensive use of this concept in ways that both echoes and dramatically departs from these Vedic and Upaniṣadic precedents. We will now see that this was indeed the case, as we turn out attention to consideration of the theme of *amṛta* (*amata*) in the Pāli materials.

2.2.2 *Amata* as religious ideal in Pāli Buddhism

The theme of *amata* is so widespread in the canon that an exhaustive study of all its instances was not possible for the purposes of this dissertation.[344] I hope, however, that in what follows, I

[343] Compare this passage with DN 11 (*Kevaddha-sutta*) and DN 2 (*Sāmaññaphala-sutta*). These texts, as Pande observes of DN 2 (84), seem to posit a simple twofold distinction between the body made up of four elements and *viññāṇa*: " 'This body of mine is endowed with form (*rūpī*) . . . . and this consciousness of mine is supported here and bound up here;" (Thanissaro Bhikkhu's translation; for Pāli, see n. 559; for further discussion, see p. 252 below). At the end of DN 11, in particular, a monk seeks to know where the four great elements cease without remainder, and asks this question of various great beings to no avail. He finally asks the Buddha, and he is told that the form of his question is wrong, and he should rather ask where they "find no footing"; "Where are long and short, small and great, fair and foul -/ Where are 'name-and-form' wholly destroyed?" The answer is, "Where consciousness is signless, boundless, all-luminous,/ That's where earth, water, fire and air find no footing,/ *There* both long and short, small and great, fair and foul –/ There 'name-and-form' are wholly destroyed." Thus far, the text seems clearly to hint that a boundless etc. *viññāṇa* is held to survive the destruction of these various conditioned phenomena, including "name-and-form" (*nāmarūpa*), and thus invites comparison, as for example pursued by Tilmann Vetter (*Ideas and Meditative Practices* 65) with other Upaniṣadic passages like BU 2.4.12 and TU 2.1. However, the text at DN 11 immediately adds a tough Buddhist twist: "With the cessation of consciousness this is all destroyed"! See Walshe, 179-180.

have at least managed to give some sense of most of the representative threads in the material. Despite the fact that it is so widely attested, however, this theme is, I believe, understudied in the secondary literature, at least in Western languages[345] (like so many things, it has received more attention in Japanese),[346] and the study that follows goes beyond anything I have been

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[344] An exhaustive study would surely be a very worthwhile project for future research.

[345] The only article-length study in English dedicated to the study of the notion of *amata* in the Pāli canon that I have been able to locate is Caroline Rhys Davids's study from 1938. This study, while suggestive, leaves much to be desired. It only treats of a very small selection of the available material; it is very cavalier in its bibliographic practice, which makes it difficult to track down her references in original texts; and, most seriously, it seems implicitly wedded to a speculative relative chronology of the canon which is suspiciously precise and seems to be governed primarily by dubious assumptions about the development of early Buddhist doctrine. This latter flaw in the chronological framework is intimately connected to the apparent constructive thrust of the article, which is to portray early Buddhism as having preached a *particular kind* of immortality – a kind of immortality that it seems Rhys Davids knows about as much in virtue of her own spiritual convictions in the early twentieth century as in virtue of her admirable scholarship of the texts. Perhaps in the service of this constructive agenda, the passages selected for examination are only those that contribute to a particular point of view, and even those passages are deracinated from their original contexts, and not analysed so much as *adduced* in the service of Rhys Davidson's Edwardian-Georgian dithyramb.

The only other substantial studies in Western languages are the relevant portions of Tilmann Vetter's *Ideas and Meditative Practices,* and his German article "Bei Lebzeiten . . ." Though Tilmann marshals a much more rigorous and impressive scholarly apparatus than Rhys Davids, in both of these treatments he focuses primarily on only a very small subset of the texts, namely the various versions, scattered throughout several canons, of the "First Sermon" (the *Dhamma-cakka-ppavattana-sutta*). It seems apparent, moreover, that in so doing Vetter is pursuing a goal somewhat similar to Rhys Davids's goal of determining what was the earliest or "original" Buddhist teaching, and one suspects that, aside from perfectly valid arguments about the antiquity of the pericopae concerned based upon their wide distribution in the sources, there is a certain rhetorical cache attached to the notion of this "first teaching" that Vetter implicitly exploits. In light of the difficulties we have encountered and discussed elsewhere in this dissertation in determining the relative antiquity of various components of the Pāli canon, it seems to me that even Vetter's more technically grounded discussion of the materials should be handled with the same cautions as that of Rhys Davids, that is, that we should hesitate to conclude too confidently that *amata* was in fact the earliest Buddhist ideal and that it was supplanted by the model of the cessation of suffering as per the Four Noble Truths, etc.

Brief treatment of the Buddha's awakening as the conquest of death, including consideration of the connection to the vanquishing of Māra and formulations like "the door to the deathless stands open", etc., are given by Bond, 241-242.

The only other sizeable "study" is Bigelow's 1908 Harvard lecture, which is, however, very thin on actual Buddhist doctrine and mostly a congeries of his own speculative thoughts on immortality as it appeared in the context of the issues of the day. This talk seems to have provoked some attention at the time of its publication: see reviews by Gill, Holland and Wiseman. It seems that Bigelow's lecture and the response to it was part of a strange rash of interest in "Buddhist ideas about immortality" on the fringes of English letters around the turn of the century: see also the quirky talk by Williams and the odd little controversy between H. G. Wells and G. K. Chesterton in the pages of *Blackfriars.* In an odd way, this context may in turn give us some explanation of the curious dynamics of Rhys Davids's treatment.

[346] See in particular the excellent summary of the Pāli sources given by Nishi Giyū, and also the useful article of Kim Han-ik. See also articles by Fujita Kōtatsu, Kumoi Shōzen and Nakaso Issei, as listed in the

able to find in the secondary literature in a number of dimensions of interpretation, in its comprehensiveness, and also in the links I draw further below between textual material that speaks of escape from or conquest of death in different senses and other interesting recent work on the way death and the dead feature in early Buddhism.

We find the soteriological goal characterised as *amata* in quite a broad range of contexts in the Pāli canon. In the following pages, I will briefly summarise a very broad body of material in which this concept features, focusing in particular on those aspects and applications of the concept relevant to the broader themes playing through Buddhist discourses of embodiment.[347]

First, this characterisation is given of the liberated state of the Buddha himself, both in accounts of the drama and scene of his initial realisation,[348] and also more generally.[349] It is also often used of the fruits of the Buddha's teaching, in other words, of the liberation that the

bibliography. Tamaki Kōshirō, "Shi to fushi: Bukkyō no mezasu mono" is of limited use, being a transcript of a talk wherein he presents his own thoughts, inspired by apparent Buddhist erudition, on such contemporary topics as organ transplants and "brain death" (*nōshi* 脳死).

[347] In this material, *amata* is frequently translated by our various translators as "the Deathless" etc., and I myself use the word "undying" (see above, p. 177), but the reader is asked to bear in mind that we are dealing with the same term, *amata/amṛta,* discussed thus far in this section.

[348] MN 26, *Ariyapariyesana-sutta,* Ñāṇamoli 260, Horner I, 211; in the same text, the Buddha has "thrown open the door of the Deathless", Ñāṇamoli 261, 262; see also DN 14, *Mahâpadāna-sutta,* Walshe 215. Returning to MN 26, the Buddha then sets off to teach, and declares, in a thrilling verse, "I go now to the city of Kāsi/ To set in motion the wheel of Dhamma./ In a world that has become blind/ I go to beat the drum of the Deathless (*amatadundubhinti*);" Ñāṇamoli 263; essentially the same narrative at SN 6.1, Bodhi 231-233. In this text, as in the *Dhamma-cakka-ppavattana-sutta,* his attainment is also described with the words, "the Deathless has been attained" (*amatam adhigatam*), Ñāṇamoli 264; also MN 34, *Cūḷagopālaka-sutta,* Ñāṇamoli 321; SN 58.57, Bodhi 1699; SN 56.11, Bodhi 1843 ff.

[349] E.g. the "fruit" of the Buddha's parabolic "ploughing" is undying, SN 7.11, Bodhi 268; DhP 114; the Buddha is "adept/ in the Deathless", ThaG 1.21 "Nigrodha", Norman 3, cited in Vetter, "Bei Lebzeiten", 220 n. 36. The phrase "open are the doors of the Deathless!" is used by Brahmā Sanaṃkumāra in describing the Buddha's teachings in DN 18 *Javasavabha-sutta*, Walshe 299. At DN 21, the *Sakkapañha-sutta,* the image of the Tathāgata seeking the "deathless goal" is unusually used in a serenade by a love-lorn *gandhabba* as an image for the intensity of his yearning for his maiden "fair of thighs"; Walshe 323.

Buddha makes possible for others:[350] in one striking epithet, the Buddha is thus called " the giver of the Deathless" (*amatassa dātā*).[351] It is explicitly asserted that *amata* can be and has been realised by persons other than the Buddha.[352] The goal of religious striving is described as *amata* not only from the perspective that succeeds upon realisation,[353] but also from the point of view of one yearning for it from within the suffering of *saṃsāra.*[354]

A meditative practice or curriculum, or the gnostic insights related to such meditations and presumably won by them, is very frequently explicitly described as the means that leads to the attainment of *amata,* and such passages invoke some of the most typical Buddhist programmes of meditation and doctrines. Thus, *amata* can follow on contemplation of the body as foul and impermanent;[355] realisation of the truth of the impermanence and inherent suffering of the *khandhas*;[356] similarly, a correct vision of the *skandhas* as illusory and flimsy;[357] the four

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[350] E.g. MN 106, *Aneñja-sappaya-sutta*, Ñāṇamoli 873, also cited in Thanissaro, *Mind Like Fire Unbound,* 92; SN 4.24, Bodhi 216.

[351] See e.g. MN 18, *Madhupiṇḍika-sutta,* Ñāṇamoli 203; MN 133,*Mahākaccānabhaddekaratta-sutta,* Ñāṇamoli 1046; MN 138, *Uddesavibhaṇga-sutta,* Ñāṇamoli 1074-1075, etc. In this pericope also occurs a phrase often cited by secondary scholars as an antecedent for the concept of the *dharmakāya,* namely the claim that the Buddha "*is* Dharma, is Brahman": *dhammabhūto brahmabhūto, vattā, pavattā, atthassa ninnetā, amatassa dātā . . .* ; also SN 1.42 (1.5.2), *Kindāna-sutta,* Bodhi 121;

[352] Sāriputta, in Vinaya *Mahāvagga* 1.23-24, but also see the same story at A.IV,167;VII,58. S.21,1;S.40,1-9; MV I.24; and ThaG 1172. Also AN 7.12.131-151, Woodward and Hare III, 313-314, cited Nishi 742; SuN 2.1, Norman 28; Channa is made to say that he "entered on the road for the attainment of the undying (*maggaṃ papajjiṃ amatassa pattiyā*)", ThaG 69, Norman 9, cited Vetter, "Bei Lebzeiten", 200 n. 36.

[353] E.g. SN 43.1.24, Bodhi 1378; one who has "won the view" "stands knocking at the door of the Deathless", SN 12.4.28, Bodhi 572, cited in Fujita, "Seishi", 52.

[354] E.g. MN 64, *Mahāmālunkyaputta-sutta,* Ñāṇamoli 540; MN 75, *Māgandiya-sutta,* Ñāṇamoli 614-615 and ff.

[355] MN 52, *Atthakanagara-sutta,* Ñāṇamoli 458; SuN 1.11, *Vijaya-sutta,* Norman 25.

[356] SN 22.87, *Vakkali-sutta*, Bodhi 939-941; in this case, we have not the term *amata,* but a vivid depiction of escape from Mara, for which see p. 199 below.

[357] SN 22.95, Bodhi 952-953, also DhP 373-374; cited Rhys Davids 280, Nishi 751.

foundations of mindfulness;[358] the faculties of conviction, persistence, mindfulness, concentration, discernment and consummation;[359] mindfulness of death (*maraṇasati*);[360] the sixfold perception of the unattractive, of death, of loathsomeness in food, of distaste for every world etc.;[361] and the eightfold path.[362] Sobriety or carefulness or "heedfulness" (this last Thanissaro's translation, Pāli *appamādo*) is the "foothold in the deathless" (*amatapada*).[363] An unusual sequence leading to undying is laid out in AN 9.14, *Samiddhi-sutta,* and nearly the same sequence is also given in AN 10.58, *Mūla-sutta*.[364] The five faculties (*indriya*) of faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration and wisdom are said to have "the Deathless as their ground, the Deathless as their destination, the Deathless as their final goal (*amatogadhaṃ amataparāyaṇaṃ amatapariyosānaṃ*)".[365] "What is the path leading to the Deathless? The destruction of lust, the destruction of hatred, the destruction of delusion [i.e. the *tridoṣa*]: this is called the Deathless."[366] At DhP 85-86, what is required is merely a generic "practice of the Dhamma/ in

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358 SN 47.37, Bodhi 1658; AN 11.17, Hare and Woodward V, 223.

359 SN 48.44, Bodhi 1689-1690.

360 AN 6.19, 6.20, Woodward and Hare III, 217-220.

361 AN 7.46, *Saññā-sutta,* Woodward and Hare IV, 28, also at AN 9.16, Woodward and Hare 258.

362 SN 45.121-126, where each of the members of the path is said in turn to have "the Deathless as its ground, the Deathless as its destination, the Deathless as its final goal (*amatogadhaṃ amataparāyaṇaṃ amatapariyosānaṃ*)", Bodhi 1549-1550; this same characterisation continues through §§139-148 (part iii in each), Bodhi 1551-1553; sequence repeated at SN 46.9, Bodhi 1622; again at SN 47.6, Bodhi 1665. This same phrase is used of five faculties (*indriya*) in SN 48.4, Bodhi 1690-1691. See also SN 5.1.7 FIX, Bodhi 1528; ThaG 980; ThiG 222, "Kisagotamī", Norman 24; ThaG 35, Norman 5.

363 DhP 21. In this connection cf. Thanissaro's interesting note to the "Rahula" verses in ThaG (295-298, Norman 34), which informs us that Māra is known as the "kinsman of the heedless" (Skt. *pramattabandhu*); see http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/kn/thag/thag.04.08.than.html, n.3, accessed October 25, 2006. See also Boyd, *Satan and Māra,* 75-76 and 75 n. 20. On Māra, see below p. 198.

364 AN 9.14, *Samiddhi-sutta,* Woodward and Hare 257; AN 10.58, *Mūla-sutta*, Woodward and Hare V, 72-73.

365 SN 48.4, Bodhi 1690-1691; SN 48.57, Bodhi 1699.

366 SN 5.1.7 FIX, Bodhi 1528: *katamaṃ amatagāmimaggo . . . rāgakkhayo dosakkhayo mohakkhayo. idaṃ vuccati amataṃ*; cited also in Kumoi 78.

line with the well-taught Dhamma".[367] An explicit association (however obscure) between the attainment of *jhāna* and attainment of undying is also set up in the description of a dispute between the *dhamma* and *jhāna* specialists adjudicated by the Buddha at AN 6.46, *Cunda-sutta,* where *jhāna* specialists in particular are said strikingly to be "those who dwell touching the deathless element *with the body*" (*ye amataṃ dhātuṃ kāyena phusitvā viharanti*).[368]

It is also noteworthy, in light of some of the Upaniṣadic material already examined above, that among descriptions of the correct view that results in freedom from death, we regularly find the notion of the conquest or uprooting of desire.[369] It is also said in at least one case that it can be gained through "diligence in doing deeds of merit", in a sense that seems specifically directed at lay patrons.[370]

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[367] Wallis 19; http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/kn/dhp/dhp.06.than.html , accessed October 30, 2006; cited in Kim 84.

[368] An 6.46, Woodward and Hare III, 253, my emphasis; so too further instances from the *Itivuttaka* cited in Vetter, "Bei Lebzeiten", 227 n. 53. This association is also supported by AN 9.36, the *Jhāna-sutta,* where the boilerplate description applied to each of the four *jhānas* in turn says that the practitioner "inclines his mind to the property of deathlessness"; Woodward and Hare IV, 285. On the idea of "touching X with the body", see below, p. 260 ff.

[369] E.g. SN 22.87, *Vakkali-sutta*, Bodhi 940; the destruction of "lust", SN 45.1.7, Bodhi 1528; removing covetousness and displeasure, SN 47.37, Bodhi 1658; the sequence at AN 9.14 and 10.58 portrays all phenomena as rooted in desire and their cessation leading to deathlessness (cited above, see n. 364); the existence of *amata* (presumably a sweet draught of ambrosia) means that we need not hanker after "the bitter draughts of desire", ThiG 503 "Sumedhā". Kumoi Shōzen provides some references to Upaniṣadic materials he considers foreshadow this Buddhist understanding; Kumoi 77, referring to KaU 4.8, 4.14-15; BU 4.4.7.

[370] SN 2.7-8, "Diligence", Bodhi 179-181, cited in Kim 91; SN 22.95, Bodhi 953 (where the Pāli is rather *accutaṃ,* for which term see p. 195 below). On other materials relating to the prospect of overcoming death in the more limited sense of facing it with equanimity, see the second section of Kim Han-ik's paper, where Kim draws some comparisons between discourse that speaks of *amata* specifically, and a range of other texts where interlocutors – often lay patrons – are helped to a calm death by the reassurance that their meritorious acts in this life have earned them a good rebirth. Kim's treatment of these materials is marred by some problematically oversimplified assumptions about the relative spiritual capacities of laypeople vs. the monastic "elite", but he is right to draw attention to other ways of at least handling death and making it more manageable, beyond the discourse of *amata* proper. Fujita, however, notes, against Kim's simplistic lay-monastic distinction, a small number of sources where the term *amata* is used in discourse directed at laypeople; Fujita, "Seishi", 52, 62 n. 83.

In some cases, we find striking metaphorical applications of this basic conceit of the soteriological goal as *amata* or "undying". These applications indicate, seemingly, that the trope was quite "productive" (to borrow a term from linguistics), that is, that it was vital and could give rise to new creative applications. In one model, eleven modes of practice are given which are said to lead to *amata,* and they are called "eleven doors to the deathless".[371] Apart from phrases like "beat the drum of the Deathless"[372] and "knocking at the door of the Deathless",[373] already cited above, we can cite the following examples. Nakulapitā explains his radiant appearance by saying he has "just now [been] anointed by the Blessed One with the

[371] MN 52, *Atthakanagara-sutta,* Ñāṇamoli 458; AN 11.17, *Dasama-sutta,* Woodward and Hare V, 223.

[372] See n. 348.

[373] See n. 353. Note that the "door(s) of the deathless" have a long and resonant afterlife in East Asia in the form of the *ganlu men* 甘露門 or *ganlu famen* 甘露法門. These are the translations corresponding to Pāli *amatadvāra* (though of course not directly from Pāli, but most likely from Sanskrit or some other Middle Indic dialect) e.g. at T26.802c05-18, corresponding to MN 52 *Aṭṭhakanāgara-sutta,* Ñāṇamoli, 454-459 (translated by the Kaśmiri Gautama Saṃghadeva, who worked in Chang'an from 383-387, then at Luoyang, at Lushan from around 391, and at Nanjing from 398); or T1.008c19-22, 25-27, *Dīrghâgama,* corresponding to the "First Sermon" pericope ("open are the doors of the deathless"), translated by Buddhayaśas and Zhu Fonian (Zhu Fonian was active in Chang'an from 365 onwards, but Buddhayaśas only between 408 and 412). The term subsequently came to refer, however, to one of a whole genre of rites for the feeding of *pretas* or "hungry ghosts" (others in the same genre were e.g. the Shuilu 水陸 and the Mengshan shishi fa 蒙山施食法), which rites were central to much of East Asian popular religious practice, the appropriation of Buddhist forms as supports for imperial authority in China, and so on. Such rites, for instance, are clearly one strand in the complex of religious ideas and forms that are woven into the Japanese *obon* お盆 festival, and very recently, they have also been at the centre of experiments in adopting East Asian liturgical forms to the very different cultural climate of American Zen among Bernie Glassman's Zen order, as the "Gate of Sweet Nectar" (for the same Ganlu men 甘露門). On this and related themes, see, for example, Peter N. Gregory and Lesley J. Weaver, *Gate of Sweet Nectar: Feeding Hungry Spirits in an American Zen Community* (Los Angeles: Zen Center of Los Angeles, 2004), a video documentary about the recent take of Glassman's group on the rites; Stephen S. Teiser, *The Ghost Festival in Medieval China* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988); Charles Orzech, "Saving the Burning-mouth Hungry Ghost," in Donald S. Lopez, Jr. (ed.) *Religions of China in Practice* (Princeton: Princeton University Press), 278-283; Daniel Stevenson, "Feeding Hungry Ghosts", in Donald Lopez, ed., *Buddhist Scriptures* (Penguin, 2004), 416-422; Charles D. Orzech, "Esoteric Buddhism and the *Shishi* in China", SBS Monograph Series no. 2 (University of Copenhagen, November 1993); Charles Orzech, "*Fang Yankou* and *Pudu:* Translation, Metaphor and Religious Identity" in Livia Kohn and Harold D. Roth, eds., *Daoist Identity: History, Lineage, and Ritual*, (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2002), pp. 213-234; Daniel Stevenson, "Text, Image and Transformation in the History of the *Shuilu fahui,* the Buddhist Rite for Deliverance of Creatures of Water and Land", in Marsha Weidner, ed., *Cultural Intersections in Later Chinese Buddhism* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2001), 30-70.

ambrosia (*amata*) of a Dhamma talk."[374] In another phrase repeated in several places, accomplished monks are described as "gaining a footing in the Deathless",[375] a phrase which exploits the common trope of practice and liberation as a fording of the flood of *saṃsāra* and a coming ashore on the far side – at a certain point practitioners "find their feet" and are assured of being able to make their way out of the stream to safe, dry land.[376]

Of special significance for this project is the frequency with which realisation of the inadequacy of the given corruptible body is said to lead to the state of undying.[377] We will return to this

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[374] SN 22.1, *Nakulapita-sutta,* Bodhi 854, cited in Fujita, "Seishi" 62 n. 83.

[375] See also e.g. SN 48.44, AN 6.19, AN 6.20, AN 9.14, 9.16, AN 10.58, ThaG 179, "Kanhadinha", Norman 22; ThaG 168, "Valliya", Norman 21; DhP 411; SuN 2.1, Norman 28. Norman translates, "plunges into the undying", but Thanissaro has "I followed the straight way,/ coming ashore in the Deathless;" see e.g. http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/kn/thag/thag.02.30.than.html, accessed November 17, 2006. See Thanissaro Bhikkhu's note to the phrase "coming ashore in the holy life" (*bharmacariy' ogadhaṃ*) in his translation of the *Sangārava-sutta,* AN 3.60: "Coming ashore *(ogadha)* in the holy life refers to the path of arahantship. The analogy here is that of crossing a stream: as one approaches the far shore, one reaches a point where one can touch bottom and gain a footing; even though one is not yet on the shore, one is safe from being swept away. Throughout the Canon, however, the word "gaining a footing" is frequently used in connection with Unbinding and the Deathless." http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/an/an03/an03.060.than.html, accessed October 25, 2006. For the analogy of liberation to the "crossing of the flood", see also SN 1.1 "Crossing the Flood" (*oghataraṇa*), Bodhi 89-90; note also that soon after, at SN 1.5, a bhikkhu who cuts the five fetters (*saṇyojana*) is called "a crosser of the flood" (*oghatiṇṇo*), Bodhi 91; etc.

[376] In his "Brahmanism to Buddhism", Lindtner traces some of these various metaphors of "flood", "stream", "waters" etc., and connects them (suggestively but tenuously, as so often in this fascinating and frustrating piece) to the notion of "the deep" at RV 10.129, a kind of Vedic analogue to the Genesis "darkness was no the face of ~"; 6. This complex extends even further that Lindtner shows. Thus *saṃsāra* is a "flood" as in a "flowing together", as Lindtner points out, 12-13; liberation is a "passing over to the other shore"; one who has begun the crossing is a "stream-enterer"; Lindtner even proposes, on the basis of an etymology I am unsure of, that *duḥkham* is similarly a hydraulic conceit < *dus-* "bad" *kham* "channel, canal, opening" (presumably cf. *kha* n. "opening, cavity", which does according to MW mean "well, fountain"); 13-14.

[377] SN 22.95, http://www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/authors/ireland/wheel107.html#passage-16, accessed October 25, 2006. At SN 47.37, meditation on the four foundations of mindfulness lead to undying; among those four foundations features "body-contemplation on the body", http://www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/authors/ireland/wheel107.html, accessed October 25, 2006. At AN 7.56 and AN 9.16, the "nine perceptions" whose contemplation leads to undying include first "perception of unattractiveness (of the body);" see e.g. http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/an/an07/an07.046.than.html, accessed October 25, 2006. In SuN 1.11, *Vijaya-sutta,* undying is said to follow on a contemplation of the foulness of the body

topic below, when we consider the broader relations between *amata* discourse and other concepts relating to embodiment under consideration in this study.

For the sake of completeness, we should also recognise that the term *amata* is occasionally used in sense that do not fit into any of the categories given in the above analysis. For example, in DN 19, the *Mahāgovinda-sutta,* the Great Steward receives a surprise visit from the great deity Brahmā Sanaṇkumāra, and is offered a boon. He asks whether it is possible for mortals to reach "the deathless Brahmā world (*amataṃ brahmalokaṃ*)", and is told that it is possible by "spurning possessive thoughts", being filled with compassion, and "aloof from stench, free from lust".[378] Aspects of this story are standard enough, such as the fact that the undying state is reached through overcoming desire. Nonetheless, it is odd that the text should posit a specific location *within* the Buddhist cosmology as deathless (*amata*), since that would suggest that there is no real need to escape *saṃsāra* in order to realise the religious goal.

Though the term *amata* is the most common term translatable as "undying", "deathless" or "immortal" that is used in the Pāli materials to describe the soteriological goal, it is not the only such term. To a lesser extent, we also find *accuta* (Skt. *acyuta*).[379]

While we are dealing with terms for immortality in the Pāli materials, we should also note that we also find in Buddhist texts the term *amara* (Skt. *amara*). This term, however, seems to be distinguished from *amata,* and usually associated with non-Buddhist, mistaken views. The only

(*asubhabhāvanā*); http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/kn/snp/snp.1.11.than.html, accessed October 25, 2006.

[378] DN 19, Walshe 308.

[379] SN 22.95, Bodhi 953; DhP 225; ThiG 97 "Sakulā", Norman 13, cited in Fujita, "Seishi", 51. On the apparently synonymous *amara,* which I believe is actually used in a manner distinct from the Buddhist notion of *amata,* see below, p. 195.

scholar to my knowledge who has treated the term *amara*, Fujita Kōtatsu, failed to notice this feature of the use of the term, and considered it rather a plain substitute for *amata metri causa.*[380] See, however, e.g. MN 82, *Raṭṭaphāla-sutta,* where the word is used by non-Buddhists wailing at the grave of a loved one over the earth-shattering realisation that the deceased was not in fact immortal (*amara*) after all.[381] Similarly, at SN 4.1, when the Buddha says to Māra, "I have understood full well how any rites/ Austere, aimed at the overthrow of death (*amara*),/ Belong to matters useless for our good;"[382] he is using the word to characterise mistaken Brahmanical or *śramaṇera* practices. This seems regularly to be the case wherever *amara* is used.[383]

The discourse that explicitly uses the term *amata* is a part of another broader pattern of discourse in the Pāli materials. As scholars such as Fujita, Nishi, Nakaso and Kim have pointed out, we must further bear in mind that the conquest of death can only be correctly interpreted in light of the understanding of death as part of the cycle of redeath and rebirth in *saṃsāra,* and this makes it possible to see the links between formulations like these and others like "the complete abandonment of birth and death",[384] "the destruction of birth",[385] "the end and

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[380] Fujita, "Seishi", 51.

[381] MN 82, *Raṭṭaphāla-sutta,* Ñāṇamoli 690, Horner II, 265-66 – in both translations this word is obscured, thus H "Alas, he is not undying", Ñ "Alas! Our love is dead!".

[382] Rhys Davids and Woodward I, 129,Bodhi 195. Text paralleled at ThaG 779; Bodhi 195-196 (there is a dispute over whether to read *aparam* or *amaram* here, and Somaratne reads *aparam*; clearly, however, both translators have read *amaram*).

[383] I have not conducted an exhaustive examination of all instances of *amara* in the Pāli canon. See also, however, SuN 2.2 v. 249, which lists many non-Buddhist practices declared inefficacious, Norman 31; ThaG 219, "Aṇgaṇikabhāradvāja", Norman 27; ThaG 276 "Sabhiya", Norman 32. Cf. also the article by Gotō mentioned above, where it is noted that *amára-* appears in BU but is otherwise unattested in the entire Vedic literature, and further that it has the distinct meaning there of "escape from physical death in this world", as opposed to *amṛta* "escape from the *saṃsāric* cycle of redeath and rebirth"; see p. 183 above.

[384] SuN 3.5 v. 500, Norman 61.

destruction of fetters and birth",[386] "going to the far shore of aging and death",[387] "go[ing] to the far shore/ of aging & death/ . . . put[ting] an end/ to suffering and stress,"[388] and so on.[389] When we broaden our purview to include such formulations, it becomes apparent that the conquest of death, or more accurately, of death-and-rebirth (*jātimaraṇa)* and associated aspects of the saṃsāric condition, is very widespread in the Pāli canonical materials indeed.

This brief survey of a very broad range of representative materials should be enough to show that the notion of *amata* is used very widely in the Pāli canon to describe the religious ideal. It is, moreover, used in association with a very broad range of more or less standard Buddhist rubrics describing meditative curricula and attendant gnostic insight, including such staples as understanding of the five *skandhas,* understanding of and revulsion with the body, the eightfold path, and the uprooting of desire, which shows that it is understood as a regular and valid characterisation of the religious goal as it is usually understood in Buddhist contexts, and not a marginal or deviant doctrine. In light of these facts, it seems that secondary literature to date, especially in Western languages, has, in generally disregarding this dimension of early Buddhist discourse, overlooked something quite significant, at least for our purposes. As I hope to show in what follows, however, even this widespread explicitly discourse about *amata,* and related notions of overcoming birth-and-death and the corruptible conditions of *saṃsāra* more

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[385] SuN 3.6 v. 517, Norman 65.

[386] SuN 3.4 v. 476, Norman 57.

[387] SuN 5.18, v. 1129-1146, Norman 143-145, cited in Kim 84.

[388] SuN 1.2: *jātimaraṇassa pāragā dukkhass' antakarā bahavāmase.* http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/kn/snp/snp.1.02.than.html, accessed October 30, 2006; cited Kim 85.

[389] Further references to a range of such broader, metaphorical expressions of the idea of the conquest of death are collected conveniently in Kim Han-ik, 84-88, and include "discarding" or "casting off" death, "loosing the bonds of death", "passing beyond birth-and-death", "being exempt from death", "not meeting with the king of death", "going to the limit of undying", etc. See also Fujita, "Seishi", 39-48.

generally, is but one part of a set of even broader patterns that show the importance of the notion of overcoming death for early Buddhism. I now turn to considerations of other elements in that pattern.

2.2.3 The defeat of Māra

This already broad discourse about the attainment of a state that somehow escapes death is revealed as even broader when we recognise that the widespread motif of the defeat of Māra is a part of this same trope.

As is well known, Māra's name derives from the verbal root /*mṛ*, and means "the killer"; he is further sometimes simply referred to as *maccu* (Skt. *mṛtyu*), "Death", or by the epithet *antaka*, the "maker of ends".[390] Primary among his various typical deeds are the deeds of killing and destroying,[391] and at least one text uses this fact to explain his name.[392] To conquer Māra is to vanquish death.[393] The Buddhist Māra is noted by Windisch (in which suggestion Boyd follows him) to be related to the Brahmanic figure of Pāpmā Mṛtyuḥ, "Death the Evil One".[394] He is also associated with Yama, the god of the underworld in both Buddhism and also Indian religions more broadly.[395]

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[390] Boyd, *Satan and Māra,* 73. Māra shares this identification with death with Satan; see Boyd 36-37.

[391] Boyd 96-99; "As was the case with the figure Satan in the early Christian tradition, the figure Māra as destroyed and death epitomizes the various activities of Māra," 99.

[392] MPPŚ, Lamotte I, 345, cited in Boyd, 97.

[393] Boyd 97, 98.

[394] Boyd 73-74.

[395] Boyd 74.

In light of these close and manifold ties between Māra and death, it should be clear that the defeat of Māra is part and parcel of the broad discourse about the conquest of or escape from death that is also reflected in the widespread use of the term *amata*. This being the case, it becomes even more apparent that the theme of conquest of death is even more central to early Buddhism than we might recognise if we only considered the term *amata* alone. The trope of the defeat of Māra is so widespread in the canon that it is surely uncontroversial, and we neither can nor need to marshal long lists of scripture and verse to establish it. For example, in all the classic accounts of the Buddha's awakening under the *bodhi* tree, the defeat of Māra, his daughters (who clearly represent, let us recall, desire), and his armies occupies a very central place in the drama. We can also note e.g. that the *Saṃyuttanikāya* includes an entire book, the *Mārasaṃyutta,* in which all the texts are devoted to descriptions of various occasions upon which the Buddha bests Māra;[396] another book, the *Bhikkhunī-saṃyutta,* is devoted to similar stories where Māra is rather bested by nuns.[397] To give only one further example, which incidentally shows that the defeat or evasion of Māra is not only ascribed to the Buddha, in one remarkably vivid passage at SN 22.87, "Vakkali", this conceit is presented in especially concrete form: Vakkali has died, and the Buddha points out to his followers a roaming darkness searching this way and that over the scene, saying,

> "That is Māra, the Evil One. He is searching for the soul of Vakkali the Clansman. 'Where is the consciousness of Vakkali the Clansman established?' But, monks, it is through unestablished consciousness that Vakkali the Clansman has attained total nibbāna."[398]

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[396] Bodhi 195-219.

[397] Noted in Norman, *Pāli Lit.,* 51.

[398] SN 22.87, Bodhi 941, also cited in Thanissaro, *The Mind Like Fire Unbound,* 26. Note that this passage comes from the same *sutta* as the famous assertion that one who sees the *dhamma* sees the Buddha, and it is much better to do so than to see his "foul body" (*pūtikāya*) (see Section 3.2 on Pāli antecedents to the *dharmakāya* below, p. 332 ff.); apparently Vakkali's escape from death is the result of his so "seeing the *dhamma*", which here is specified as a lesson on the impermanence and inherent suffering of the *khandhas* (Bodhi 939-940).

Given the identification of Māra with Death (*maccu*) noted above, we can be sure that we are merely dealing with a further arm of this very ramified trope when we read of "release from Death's snare",[399] "what is out of reach of Death",[400] or "cutting the strong stretched-out net of deceitful death".[401] The dimension of the discourse of conquering or escaping death that makes use of the figure of Māra extends still further in metaphorical passages where Māra is referred to by his epithet the "king of death" (*maccurāja*). To "view the world as void", without "any view/ in terms of self" is the way to view the world "so that the King of Death does not see one;"[402] we also read of "thrusting away the army of the king of death (*maccurājasena*)".[403]

For our purposes, it is significant that Māra is sometimes explicitly identified with Kāma, "Desire".[404] This is clearly related to the fact that another of Māra's typical modes of action is inclining us towards sense desires:[405] This association, as Ananda Coomaraswamy points out,[406]

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[399] SuN 1.9 v. 166, Norman 25.

[400] E.g. MN 34, *Cūḷagopālaka-sutta,* Ñāṇamoli 321.

[401] SuN 2.12 v. 357, Norman 44.

[402] SuN 5.16, Norman 142, cited in Thanissaro, *Mind Like Fire Unbound,* 87.

[403] ThaG 7, "Bhalliya", Norman 1.

[404] Boyd 74.

[405] Boyd 81-84.

[406] Coomaraswamy, *Yakṣas* 25-26. It is sometimes difficult to discern where the line falls between historical and philological scholarship and constructive theology in Coomaraswamy's argument in this chapter. He makes a series of very far-reaching identifications. Thus Agni as Prajāpati is "a preferred name of . . . the Supreme Identity of Mitra . . . and Varuṇa, *apara* and *para* Brahman," and that of this figure it is said, "His is the likeness both of Life and Death" (*yasya chāyā amṛtam yasya mṛtyuḥ,* RV 10.121.2). He is friend when the sun (Mitra) but enemy when the Devourer or Death;" 25. Coomaraswamy designates this Janis-like deity Marā-Kāmadeva, but it is not clear whether this is a designation found in the texts or his own analytic/constructive composite. He goes on later in the chapter to incorporate this identification into a very far-reaching universalistic construction of Buddhism as merely another phase in an eternal cycle whereby a former supreme deity is defeated by a new "solar hero"; for him, the defeat of Buddha by Māra is merely on instantiation of this pattern, and Maitreya" (which Coomaraswamy translates as "generically Mitra") is as much the resurrected Māra, resurrected Sun and reawakened

is older and more widespread than Buddhism.[407] This shows that the vanquishing of Māra, and the attainment of an "undying" state (*amata*), is intimately connected to the fundamental Buddhist project of extirpating craving (*tanha/tṛṣṇā*); in this light, it is perhaps only to be expected that, as we saw above, the attainment of a religious goal characterised as *amata* is sometimes explicitly linked with the abandonment of desire.[408]

In light of these apparent associations between the conceit of the defeat of Māra and the conquest of death articulated in *amata* discourse, it is of special interest to this broader project to note the following passage, cited by Boyd: Rādha asks, "Pray, Lord, how far is there Māra?" "Where a body is, Rādha, there would be Māra or the things of the nature of Māra, or at any rate what is perishing" (*rūpe kho Rādha sati Māro vā assa māretā vā yo vā pana mīyate*).[409] We will examine this connection in more depth below, when we turn to the question of how best to interpret this discourse in the early Buddhist context, and its significance for discourse about the body. Before we do so, however, I would like to consider another dimension of early Buddhist discourse that possibly resonates with *amata* discourse, and also consider the question of the relative dating of all these materials.

Indra as the 'future Buddha';" 29. Despite these highly interpretative dimensions of his argument, however, Coomaraswamy's broad perspective, and the way he locates the Buddha's conquest of Māra in the context of a larger history of Indian ideas about vanquishing death and the connection between death and desire is illuminating.

[407] See, for example, BU 1.2, "What is hunger but death?" Olivelle 7; in this cosmogonical narrative, the beginning of the cosmos is envisaged as a state of nothing that is identical with death: "Death alone covered this completely;" the cosmos is then gradually elaborated in a series of steps each of which springs from the desires of death.

[408] See above, n. 369.

[409] SN 23, Rhys Davids and Woodward, III, 155. Cited in Boyd, 106-107. (The same, however, is said to be said of the other *skandhas*, a fact that Boyd does not mention.) Boyd comments: "It is because there is *rūpa* (body) that there is something which is subject to death, namely, the body. Likewise, because there is *rūpa* (body), there is something which kills or destroys, in the sense that *rūpa* is one of the many interrelated factors which eventually leads to or results in birth, decay and death (*paṭiccasamuppāda*). Both these active and passive aspects of 'death' are identified with Māra by the Buddha" (107).

2.2.4 Undying and the symbolism of fire

A further, circumstantial piece of neglected evidence for the resonance of the theme of *amata/amṛta* in early Buddhism might also perhaps be found in the symbolism of fire in the Pāli canon. Thanissaro Bhikkhu has made a very thought-provoking study of this imagery in his *Mind Like Fire Unbound.* Thanissaro studies the understanding of fire, both as a physical phenomenon and as the Vedic god Agni, at the time of the historical Buddha, in order to explore the most likely and faithful interpretation of the extended conceit of fire in the Nikāyas, most notably: the idea of liberation as the *nibbāna/nirvāṇa* (usually understood as the "blowing out") of a flame; and also, more specifically, of the doctrine that the liberated mind cannot be said to have "gone" anywhere in particular, any more than we can say whether an extinguished fire has gone north, south, east or west.[410] He argues persuasively that fire was understood in that period to be omnipresent in potential, so that putting it out was merely a process of causing Agni to become hidden rather than manifest, and kindling it was calling up a being already present in some sense.[411] He further argues on this basis that the most appropriate rendering of the term *nibbāna/nirvāṇa* is "unbound" or "released", following Buddhaghosa's etymological rendering (hence the title of Thanissaro's book).[412]

Thanissaro recognises that another major dimension of significance to the image of the Vedic Agni is that he is immortal,[413] as we saw above.[414] Thanissaro, however, is very keen to impress

[410] See e.g. MN 72, *Aggi-vacchagotta-sutta,* cited Thanissaro 21-23.

[411] "When fire is extinguished, Agni and his powers do not go out of existence. Rather, they go into hiding;" 16. Also 17; 41 for a summary of the metaphorical Buddhist application of this doctrine to the experience of liberation.

[412] Thanissaro 2, 42.

[413] Thanissaro 17, citing RV 6.7; 18.

upon us that the Buddha was borrowing only the theme of omnipresence as a figure for the untrammelled nature of the liberated state; conversely, he wants to downplay as much as he can the notion of immortality that was also associated with Vedic fire: "Some scholars . . . assume that, in using the image of an extinguished fire to illustrate what he taught, the Buddha was simply adopting the Vedic position wholesale and meant it to carry the same implications as the last quotation above: a pleasant eternal existence for a tranquil soul."[415] "Instead of using the subsistence of latent fire as an image for immortality, [the Buddha] uses the diffuse, indeterminate nature of extinguished fire as understood by the Vedicists to illustrate the absolute indescribability of the person who has reached the Buddhist goal."[416]

In light of the very extensive discourse about *amata* that we have found in the Pāli materials, it seems to me that Thanissaro goes too far here in his attempt to protect Buddhist doctrine from heterodox misreading as a theory of eternal soul. It may indeed be true that we would be mistaken to read the discourse of *amata* as propounding the possibility of "immortality" understood as the eternal existence of a spiritual personality. However, the clear acceptance of early Buddhism of the idea of *amata* in some interpretation surely means that there is no real obstacle to supposing that the extensive imagery of fire studied by Thanissaro retained its associations of *amata/amṛta*. If it is indeed incumbent upon us to avoid, by recognising this dimension of the image, falling into personalist or eternalist fallacies in our interpretation of the doctrine, what is required is that we take care in our interpretation of the notion of *amata* as it was found in Buddhist contexts,[417] not that we simply refuse to entertain this dimension of

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414 See n. 315 above.

415 Thanissaro 20. So far as I can see, Thanissaro never actually identifies or cites such scholars.

416 Thanissaro 21.

417 See below, p. 205 ff., for consideration of how *amata* should best be interpreted for our purposes in this study.

fire symbolism at all. Once we do open up consideration of this dimension of fire imagery in the canon, it seems plausible that the conceit of an "unbound" flame studied by Thanissaro – an image for the of mind from specificity and particularity into a kind of unconditioned, omnipresent state of free potentiality – arguably provides, in its echoes of the Vedic Agni, another dimension in which early Buddhist materials reflect a concern for the evasion or defeat of death.

2.2.5 Relative dating in materials attesting to *amata* as a religious ideal

In keeping with my general strategy, I have relegated detailed discussion of the relative dating of these ideas to the relevant Appendix (Appendix 1.2). Here, it will suffice to very briefly summarise my findings there and bring them to bear on the discussion of these ideas as part of the larger history of ideas about embodiment.

On the basis of numerous complex considerations, it seems that it is the safest interpretation of the evidence to regard ideas about *amata* as dating back to some of the earliest materials we can identify in the canon. However, against the views of some secondary scholars like Caroline Rhys Davids and Kumoi, I see no reason to think that this characterisation of the religious ideal was superseded during the Pāli-canonical period. Rather, it seems likely that it persisted as an accepted and unremarkable part of the overall doctrinal landscape throughout the period. Readers who are interested in the detailed arguments for these judgements are referred to the Appendix itself.

This means that the idea that the religious ideal is characterisable as "the deathless" is as early as anything else we can find relating to the problematic of embodiment in the Pāli materials, and it is of course for this reason that I have treated these materials in the present chapter.

2.2.6 Interpretation of *amata* and related ideas in the early Buddhist context

Secondary scholars who have treated the topic of *amata* in the Pāli materials to date have tended to see them as indicative of a Buddhist reinterpretation of the Upaniṣadic notion, where an *amṛta* understood in the *Upaniṣads* as a post-mortem reward for religious attainments in this life is replaced by a Buddhist emphasis on the realisation of exemption or immunity from, or the irrelevance of, death in the here and now. Nishi Giyū, for example, argues that *amṛta* in the Upaniṣadic conception is a sloughing off of the body to merge into a transcendent *brahman,* that is, the realisation of a true, transcendent, metaphysical, spiritual subject or soul. In Buddhism, by contrast, it is rather a "diametrically opposed" object attainable in this world and body ("right smack in the middle of impermanence, just as it is" このまま無常の真っ只中),[418] , i.e. radically immanent. After a survey of the Vedic and Upaniṣadic background, Nakaso Issei also sees the Buddhist materials as revealing a turn whereby immortality is rendered immanent and realised in this life and body, rather than as a post-mortem destiny.[419]

It is not so clear, however, that the Upaniṣads necessarily do consider *amṛta* only as a post-mortem destiny. Certainly, there are indeed texts in which a state of *amṛta* is said to proceed upon the death of the body, or at least related to it.[420] For example, at BU 4.4.7, immortality is spoken of in the same breath as the "corpse", lying "on an anthill" "as a snake's slough, lifeless and discarded"; the text further emphasises that by the "path" comprising the gnostic knowledge it sets out, men "go up to the heavenly world". And yet, in the same text, we also

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[418] Nishi 755.

[419] Nakaso 51.

[420] I am grateful to Rick Weiss for observations made in conversation that helped me clarify my thinking on this point.

read that "a mortal becomes immortal,/ And attains *brahman in this world*" (my emphasis), and that "while we are *still here*, we have come to know it . . . . those who have known it – they become immortal", suggesting that in some significant sense, this Upaniṣad, too, conceives of *amṛta* as in some sense realisable in this life. This pattern of ambivalence can be traced in a broader range of texts, so that it seems to me that we are forced to say that the Upaniṣads recognise attainment of *amṛta* in the here-and-now[421] *and also* as a post-mortem destiny,[422] even if they do not exclusively imagine it as to be found in the here-and-now. This means that it is not entirely accurate to portray Buddhist doctrines, which I would agree overwhelmingly portray *amata* as realisable in the here-and-now, as a radical new departure in this regard; at best, we might say that in Buddhism there is a greater emphasis on this interpretation, and that post-mortem "immortality" is downplayed if not entirely absent.

There are other dimensions in which there is significant continuity between Buddhist and Upaniṣadic notions of *amṛta/amata.* The connection drawn in the Buddhist materials between the conquest or abolishment of desire and *amata/amṛta* is a point it also shares with certain Upaniṣadic texts.[423] Similarly, as we have seen above, the attainment of *amata/amṛta* by certain gnostic insights is a point common to both the *Upaniṣads* and Buddhism.[424] In addition, and significantly for our topic, it seems that in both Upaniṣadic and Buddhist discourse on this

[421] E.g. KaU 2.18 teaches that "the wise one" "is unborn and eternal, primeval and everlasting./ And he is not killed, when the body is killed", in which case it is clearly not a matter of realising *amṛta* "post mortem", since it is impossible for "the wise one" to undergo death at all.

[422] E.g. KeU 2.5, which says of the wise, i.e. one " who is here in a man and he who is up there in the sun – they are one and the same" that "become immortal/ when they depart from this world", Olivelle 228-229; MuU 3.2.6: "In the worlds of *brahman,* at the time of the final end,/ having become fully immortal,/ they will all be liberated", Olivelle 276. Oddly enough, some of these very passages comprise the main evidence cited by Borman for his thesis that there is a strong Upaniṣadic precedent for the notion of *jīvanmukti*: see Borman, 26, 28-29.

[423] E.g. BU 4.4.5-7, Olivelle 65. See also n. 338, 369, 408 above, and associated text.

[424] See above, p. 190, n. 333.

topic, realisation of *amṛta/amata* is often closely associated with disidentification from the ordinary, given, fleshly body.[425]

Against these continuities, it seems to me that the significant senses in which Buddhism departs from Upaniṣadic precedent are the following.

First, it is indeed notable that whereas in the Upaniṣads, there is talk of *amṛta* as a post-mortem fate, such talk is markedly absent from Buddhist discourse of *amata.* This is surely a part of the more general Buddhist refusal to talk about the post-mortem destiny of the Tathāgata more generally.

Second, we must acknowledge clearly that in the Upaniṣadic discourse the particular *kind* of gnosis that leads to realisation of *amṛta,* while it shares with Buddhism a disidentification from the ordinary given body, frequently substitutes for it a correct identification with some other immortal instance – most usually breath or *ātman.* In the Buddhist case, however, it is not usually the case that gnostic insight leading to undying entails identification with anything.

Third, as we saw above, *amata* in the Buddhist context is associated with a wide range of specifically Buddhist doctrines and practices, including the *jhānas,* the eightfold noble path, the right understanding of the *skandhas,* etc., many of which have no particular correlates in the

[425] For the Upaniṣadic case, see e.g. BU 4.4.13, "the self has entered his body", disambiguating body and *ātman*, Olivelle 68; BU 5.15, "ashes are this body's lot", Olivelle 78-79; CU 8.3.4 on the "deeply serene one" who "rises up from this body, and reaches the highest light", Olivelle 169; KaU 2.18, "he is not killed, when the body is killed", Olivelle 237; ŚU 1.12 on "obtaining a body made of the fire of Yoga", Eliade 122, citing Hume 398.

Upaniṣadic discourse.[426] In this respect, Buddhist *amata* doctrine differs from its Upaniṣadic precedents as Buddhism generally differs from Upaniṣadic ideas.

Fourth, it seems that Upaniṣadic discourse often casts the gnostic insight leading to *amṛta* in terms of a recognition of something that is already the case, but of which we are ordinarily ignorant; thus, for instance, if a person recognises that they are truly *ātman,* and not the body etc., and if *ātman* is truly undying, the implication seems to be that *ātman* has been there all along, and was undying all along, and the difference that has been made by the gnostic insight is merely that this pre-existing fact has been realised. In the Buddhist case, however, it is difficult to see any grounds for arriving at a similar interpretation of the discourse of *amata.* The facts into which the practitioner attains gnostic insight, which insight leads to the state of undying, are, rather than positive facts about some undying entity or domain, uniformly, at base,[427] *negative* facts about the unsatisfactory nature of our given condition, expressed variously as the inadequacy of the given body, the universality of suffering, impurity, the inevitability of death, and so on. This being the case, it seems that, against the Upaniṣadic materials, Buddhism posits far more the attainment of the undying as the realisation of a radically *new* spiritual condition, rather than as the gnostic realisation of something that has somehow ontologically been the case all along.[428] In this respect, too, it seems we are once more faced with very general and basic differences between Buddhism and the Upaniṣadic *milieu.*

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[426] See above, 190 ff., for a list.

[427] Even in cases where *amata* is said to stem from the completion of the eightfold path, the perfection of the five *indriya,* etc., such a negative gnostic apprehension of the dissatisfactory nature of given being is implicit somewhere within the formula.

[428] If this interpretation is correct, it has implications for much later doctrines of original enlightenment, *tathāgatagarbha* and so forth.

With these points of interpretation in mind, I think it is possible to specify to some degree the sense in which the Buddhism understands it to be possible to attain *amata,* and thereby, hopefully, to justify my contention at the beginning of this section that a translation like "undying", in various usages, does it better justice.

It seems clear that the Buddhist doctrine of *amata* in no way involves a denial or even an amelioration of the gruesome facts of inevitable physical death for each person. If anything, the sustained attention on the fallible nature of the body and the inevitability of death (*maraṇasati*) with which *amata* is regularly associated suggests that it is rather predicated upon a heightened awareness of these inexorable facts. It does seem, however, that the realisation of *amata* is predicated on a very radical disidentification with the fleshly body that undergoes this physical death. Thus, practitioners are enjoined on the one hand to realise that none of the aspects of their phenomenological embodiment (using that term, provisionally for the moment, to refer more broadly to the *skandhas* as a whole, of which body *rūpa* often stands in by synecdoche) are "me" or "mine"; on the other hand, they are also encouraged in this cognitive disidentification by sustained attention to the undesirable and inadequate qualities of that conditioned, destructible, suffering embodiment. It would seem, then, that the texts hold that it is possible to realise a state of undying in the specific sense that it is possible to realise a state in which one no longer "*is*" the thing that dies, and in which state, therefore, the nonetheless inevitable fact of physical death does not pertain to one's spiritual condition or destiny.

This interpretation, let it be noted, carefully attempts to leave open the difficult questions of (1) exactly what kind of a state this "undying" *is*, by merely saying what it is *not*; (2) whether, when one "is not" the mortal body, one "is" anything else, or anything at all; (3) whether, even should it be the case that one "is" indeed "something" in even a provisional sense, this

"something" survives physical death or not, and therefore, whether "immortality" here carries any connotations of "eternal life", as we would usually assume.[429] Such an interpretation, I hope, observes the usual scruples of expression also adhered to on such questions by Buddhist discourse (at least the dialects of Buddhist discourse we are treating here).[430] It is in this sense that I have proposed the word "undying", meaning "not given to death", "for which death does not obtain", as our working translation here of *amata*.

We could perhaps summarise these considerations by saying that, along with much else in early Buddhism, the concept of *amata* we have been studying here is overwhelmingly ineffabilist, rather than effabilist,[431] in its orientation.

A last dimension of this early Buddhist discourse about the attainment of undying which we must observe for future reference is also entirely negative. It is notable, in light of later developments that we will examine below, that in all this talk of undying or immortality, there is *no* sign, that I have discovered, that the attainment of undying was understood to have any special positive embodiment at all. That is to say, in this entire discourse, we have observed no ideal embodiment, of the Buddha or any other being, which is held out as a religious goal or celebrated for the fact that it is characterised by or gives access to immortality. This is in striking contrast to some later doctrines.[432]

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[429] My student Benno Blaschke has suggested that in such a state, one is "not-to-die" in the sense that one is *already dead* (personal communication). In repeating this suggestion, I do not mean that it is necessarily the correct interpretation of the textual facts at issue here, but rather, simply to show that the notion of *amata* is amenable to various coherent readings.

[430] See Chapter 5.1 for an examination of a major shift in Buddhist history in this expository strategy.

[431] See the definitions above at n. 39-42.

[432] Once more, see Chapter 5.1, where we trace the emergence of overt claims that the Buddha is immortal, and that this immortality is matched by a specific corporeal corollary, the body of adamant (*vajrakāya*).

2.2.7 Funerary associations and charnel-ground practices

The material we have surveyed so far in this section, on the widespread description of the Buddhist *summum bonum* as *amata* or, more broadly, the conquest of death and related conditions, shows that they together constituted an important theme in early Buddhist texts. This relatively unobserved fact about early Buddhist teachings and ideals can be linked to other facts, which together seem to show that there were other senses in which early Buddhism figured itself as powerful or triumphant over the realm of death.

In his article "Immigrant Monks and the Proto-Historical Dead", Schopen argues that early Buddhist *stūpas* and "monastic complexes" were frequently built on grave sites, not infrequently more specifically sites of megalithic funerary significance. Schopen holds that this pattern is very widespread and indubitable, and indicates that Buddhists "intentionally"[433] located themselves on sites of funerary significance when first entering a new region.[434] I have some misgivings as to whether or not Schopen is justified in claiming that Buddhist *residences* were located in funerary sites right from the time of entry of Buddhists into a given geographic area.[435] Regardless, however, of whether the association of Buddhists with such sites was, as Schopen claims, a strategy by which monastics located themselves in new communities *at the*

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[433] Schopen 225, 236, 237 etc.

[434] Schopen 236.

[435] Schopen seems to distinguish insufficiently between *stūpas* and full-blown monasteries, and effectively collapses the two into a single category of "Buddhist sites". But if the *stūpa* is a kind of funerary monument, what is remarkable about it being situated in the same places as other, older monuments of the same broad type? (Of course, Schopen has done other work, in his article "Burial *Ad Sanctos*", to show that *stūpas* were often associated with monastic complexes archaeologically, but it is hard to see that this work would imply that *stūpas must* be associated with monastic dwellings.) Schopen, however, cites far fewer cases of monastic complexes or dwellings in such locations than he does *stūpas,* and makes no argument for a regular association of monastic dwellings with *stūpas;* even for those cases of monastic dwellings he does refer to, moreover, in no case does he address the question of the dating of the monastic complexes in question separate from the dates of the associated *stūpas*.

time of "migration" or entry, this association between monastic complexes and funerary sites is part of a broader pattern. As Schopen himself points out,[436] we have also the pattern of "burial *ad sanctos*" he has studied elsewhere, whereby the funerary remains of ordinary people are interred as close to Buddhist *stūpas* as possible, and where those *stūpas* are, moreover, quite regularly associated with monastic complexes, so that the latter were "turned . . . into bone yards or 'champs d'urnes funéraires'".[437]

The only reasons that Schopen himself suggests for this Buddhist strategy are entirely pragmatic: that Buddhist monks were thus trying to find a niche for themselves in their new communities,[438] etc. However, it seems possible to coordinate this archaeological data with a range of other evidence, including the material discussed above regarding *amata* and the conquest of Māra, to argue that it has other dimensions of significance that are overlooked by Schopen.

First, we can consider some suggestive facts gathered in Robert DeCaroli's recent book *Haunting the Buddha,* where he has followed up on the hint provided by Schopen's study (whose influence he acknowledges several times)[439] to suggest that the co-presence of megalithic and Buddhist funerary complexes is part of a broader pattern of association between Buddhism and

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[436] Schopen 238.

[437] Schopen 238.

[438] "It had above all else to forge some links with the local land, to find a place in the local landscape," 216; "It would have established the Buddhist community as the keepers, the guardians of the native dead," 237.

[439] DeCaroli makes particularly heavy use of Schopen's study in Ch. 3, 55 ff. DeCaroli adds to Schopen's thesis in some important respects. For example, he suggests that megalithic settlements were often associated with villages outside "Sanskritized" imperial control, and that the presence of Buddhist remains immediately above the megalithic layer may indicate that Buddhism formed the first sustained connection of these marginal sites with "larger political or cultural institutions"; 33. This observation, of course, does not necessarily contradict Schopen's claims, but rather supplements them.

mortuary cults in early Indian materials, a pattern that he argues shows that Buddhist monks were from very early on regarded as wielding power over death in a role as "funerary experts".[440]

DeCaroli attempts to consider Schopen's connection between mortuary and Buddhist sites in light of a broad range of textual evidence and other parts of the archaeological evidence, and to consider both in conjunction with historical developments of the period. He argues that the emergence of the Śunga dynasty (185-173 B.C.E.), who were of a low-ranking Brahmin caste in origin, was attended by persecution and the withdrawal of patronage, and was "possibly" seen by monks as "the death knell of the order".[441] Inscriptions from the period indicate a significant shift from royal to non-elite and even *saṃgha* patronage,[442] which DeCaroli interprets as the sign of new strategies elaborated by the monks to respond to this challenge. DeCaroli argues that such a shift was most likely accomplished by developing a range of services that were of interest to non-elite laypeople, which included serving as "fields of merit",[443] and thus enabling laypeople to engage in merit-making practices,[444] and also utilising the spiritual powers of the *saṃgha* to deal on behalf of laypeople with supernatural problems.[445]

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[440] Later in the book, DeCaroli summarises his argument thus: "Despite the complexities in dealing with the restless dead from within a system of rebirth, close ties between spirit-deities and the ancestral dead can be demonstrated. It seems likely that the *saṃgha's* skill in tending to spirit-deities is just one part of the Buddhist proficiency in dealing with the dead in all their forms. The ability to transfer merit and remove the threat posed by the dangerous dead provided the *saṃgha* with a social role that ensured its continued support and growth while allowing its members to remain separate from secular society. This process was so successful that it became an integral part of Buddhist practice and provided this emerging institution with the mechanism whereby it could prosper and expand;" 186-187.

[441] DeCaroli 33.

[442] DeCaroli 34.

[443] The assertion of this role was related to the assertion of power over the supernatural in the claim, very successful in the long run in Buddhist history, that the surest way of pleasing spirit-beings of various kinds was to donate to the *saṃgha* and dedicate the merit of that act to the spirit-being concerned; see e.g. DeCaroli 75.

It is the service provided by monastics in managing "supernatural problems" that is of interest to us here. The supernatural problems monastics offered to solve included the taming of supernatural beings like *nāga* and *yakṣa*;[446] but also of hungry ghosts (*bhūta* or *preta*),[447] who were at times identified with the dangerous ancestral dead.[448] DeCaroli also adduces burial *ad sanctos* as another piece of evidence for "a widespread public interest in the *saṃgha* as funerary experts".[449]

DeCaroli also cites some other evidence to show that the association between Buddhism and power over burial grounds is not only confined to the archaeological remains. Monks are portrayed as dwelling in cemeteries;[450] and most interestingly, DeCaroli points out that there are resonances of this theme in narratives of the Buddha's enlightenment at Bodh Gayā. First, DeCaroli points out the fact that in the *Lalitavistara* account of his enlightenment, the Buddha is

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[444] DeCaroli 35, 38.

[445] DeCaroli 38.

[446] DeCaroli 38-53.

[447] E.g. DeCaroli 96-97. In fact, the distinction between the dead and spirit-deities like *nāga* and *yakṣa* was not always watertight in any case: spirit-deities often haunted sites also associated with mortuary practice, 55; it was possible to be reborn as a *yakṣa* or a *nāga* in the ordinary scheme of things, 91-92; and lineages sometimes had a close association with one particular tutelary spirit-deity, whose role thus approached that of remote ancestors, 92. DeCaroli recounts an suggestive tale of a *yakkhinī* called Kālī who is gradually moved through various sites to the village gate, which might perhaps be a retrospective aetiological justification for the gradual apotheosis of an ancestor, 93.

[448] E.g. DeCaroli 87. DeCaroli makes a plausible argument from analogies in contemporary ethnography that the model was probably one of propitiating the recent, dangerous dead by various placatory offerings and converting them into docile, stable and friendly ancestors; 87-91.

[449] DeCaroli 98-102. Here, DeCaroli fails to distinguish adequately between burial in such locations for the access it might provide to monastic services, and such burial for access to the power of the relics contained in the large *stūpas* at the centre of such sites (the latter being more the interpretation that has been proposed by his teacher Schopen.

[450] DeCaroli 55, citing the *Mūlasarvâstivādavinaya* (MSV); 56, citing same;

portrayed as dressing himself in a funeral cloth, taken from the corpse of a village girl, when he goes to sit under the *bodhi* tree for his epoch-making meditation.[451] DeCaroli compares other versions of the tale[452] to show that these mortuary echoes are reflected in them by details of the offering of Sujātā that echo the prescriptions of the *Manusmṛti* for offerings to the dead,[453] and suggests that the interpolation of these details into the story perhaps reflect the assertion that offerings to the Buddha, which earn merit then transferred to the ancestors, are more efficacious than old-style *śraddhā* offerings directly to the ancestors themselves. According to DeCaroli's analysis, these implications are made very clear in the *Nidanākathā* account in particular.[454] DeCaroli also notes the suggestive fact that Bodh Gayā is a major centre of the *śraddhā* rites for dead ancestors,[455] and argues that the site is exploited in accounts of the enlightenment for these associations and the evidence Śākyamuni's victory over its dangers gives for his great power.[456] Given that the defeat of Māra and his armies is a major episode in the drama of enlightenment, these further mortuary associations, even in such late texts, further suggest the centrality of the conquest of death to the early Buddhist religious ideal.

DeCaroli's arguments in this book are, understandably given the very ancient period he is attempting to study, at times quite speculative and tenuous, and some important points are

[451] In *Lalitavistara* only.

[452] *Buddhacarita, Lalitavistara,* and *Nidanākathā,* all of which, it must be noted, are, from our current point of view, quite or very late. DeCaroli discusses the dates of these sources 107-109; they range from the first to the fifth centuries of the common era.

[453] DeCaroli 109-111.

[454] DeCaroli 111.

[455] DeCaroli mentions that Gayā has been known as such a site at least since the *Mahābhārata,* and also admits that "it is difficult to ascertain whether the regions funerary role predates the Buddhist claims to Bodh Gayā." DeCaroli 106.

[456] DeCaroli 114-117.

argued on the basis of only a few pieces of evidence. Nevertheless, it seems to me that his study is of value for pointing out a possible general pattern whereby: (1) the Buddha is a conqueror of death, instantiated both in his mythological struggle with the personified Māra and his choice of Gayā, an ancient mortuary capital, as his seat of enlightenment; (2) that the Buddha and his relics are understood to have particular efficacy in intervening in and ameliorating the post-mortem fate of the ancestral dead, and this is linked to Buddhist claims to be able to tame spirit-deities (who have murky connections with the unruly dead);[457] (3) that the *saṃgha* is also understood, by association, as the heirs of the Buddha, or perhaps in virtue of their similar spiritual attainments, to have these same powers, and that these powers were exploited by the *saṃgha* in making a socio-economic niche for themselves in their host communities.

Most if not all of DeCaroli's sources for his claim that Buddhist monks claimed or exercised power over dangerous spirits are post-canonical, but it is clear from the narratives of the *Petavatthu,* for instance, that already in canonical times, the suffering of *petas* and some possibility of its relief had been woven into Buddhist discourses about *kamma* and the transferral of merit by accomplished monks. Mention is made in the *Petavatthu* of the idea that the living would "give a gift for the benefit of their *peta* kinsmen and indicate: 'Let this be for our relatives;'" "Thereupon the *petas* received happiness." In this same tale, King Bimbisāra achieves the release of a number of *petas* by a generous gift to the Buddha.[458] In "The Devourer of Five Children", we are also shown that the release of *petas* can be achieved by gifts to "elders", as well as the Buddha himself.[459] Elsewhere, this doctrine is even stated in what

[457] On this point, in addition to the facts of burial *ad sanctos,* see for instance DeCaroli's claim that the scramble for the Buddha's relics, as depicted in the MPNS, was "laden with mortuary associations", 114.

[458] Gehman 8-10.

[459] Gehman 13.

amounts to a definition: "If one presents a gift to the Blessed One and to the Community of Ariyans, or even to one monk and transfers to her [a *petī*] the credit, and she appreciates it, in that way she will have release from suffering."[460] These examples could certainly be multiplied.[461] On the basis of these passages, we can safely conclude that the idea of ministering to the dead through charity to the Buddhist order was definitely well established in canonical times,[462] and indeed, we might say without exaggeration that this is the main moral of many of the stories in this collection.[463]

I believe that DeCaroli's suggestions that early Buddhist monks claimed the power to vanquish or control the dangerous dead, and offered to wield that power on behalf of the laity in return for patronage, may also be circumstantially shown to be at least plausible by additional reference to another dimension of Buddhism he does not mention: the charnel-ground meditation. It is clear from modern ethnography that at least in modern Buddhist forest traditions, one of the major challenges presented by the charnel-ground meditation is the

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[460] Gehman 18.

[461] See further e.g. Gehman 21, 29, 31 etc. See also Norman, *Pāli Literature* 71, for the *Saṃsāramocaka-petavatthu, Petavatthu* 2.1, a tale in which Sāriputta releases a *peta* from suffering by transferring "the reward of a generous action" to her. Another related pattern is that the tale will show, by the suffering of the *petas,* what happens in the afterlife to those who are so foolish as to be stingy towards the *saṃgha,* and good layfolk, having learnt their lesson, are portrayed as being generous in this life and being reborn into a good destiny in the next; see e.g. Gehman 26.

[462] On the date of the *Petavatthu,* Norman concludes, on the grounds of a mention in the *Nandaka-petavatthu* of the name of a certain king, that the text is "late", but by this, he means that it dates to around the same time as ThaG and ThiG, i.e. within a couple of centuries of the Buddha's *nirvāṇa* or prior to the reign of Aśoka; Norman, *Pāli Literature,* 71, 77.

[463] Note that if it is thus true that Buddhism asserted a dominion over the domain of the ancestral dead in India from such early times, and further, if on the basis of this dominion there was indeed a claim that the Buddhist monastic order were the most efficacious intermediaries between the living and the dead, this would of course place the often-noted East Asian emphasis on the role of Buddhist clergy in funerary rites, as witnessed e.g. by the materials mentioned above in n. 373, in a very different perspective. That is to say, even practices as remote from the ancient Indian context as the busy ministrations of contemporary Sōtō monks on motor-scooters to their urban parishioners at the time of Obon お盆 might represent part of a very old and pan-Buddhist pattern, rather than a reflex of a putative "Sinifying" accommodation of Buddhism to East Asian filial piety and ancestor worship in the mediaeval period.

supernatural beings, malevolent spirits and ghosts that inhabit them, and the fear engendered by such beings,[464] and one of the major fruits of this practice is the overcoming of that fear,[465] and overcoming such fears can lead to the capitulation of malevolent spiritual forces.[466] The charnel-ground meditation, then, at least in modern experience,[467] is another site on which the Buddhist conquest of death can be enacted, and it is worth returning briefly to the topic of how this practice features in early canonical materials to explore its connection to the broader theme of the conquest of death.

As we saw above,[468] meditation on a decomposing corpse is widely attested in the earliest layers of the Pāli canon, though none of the canonical descriptions say outright that the practitioner must actually physically go to the charnel-ground to practice. However, it is also clear, from numerous mentions in the canon, that dwelling in a charnel-ground was a very widespread practice both among early Buddhists[469] and non-Buddhist ascetics[470] alike. The Buddha himself

[464] See e.g. Tiyavanich 96-100.

[465] Tiyavanich 100-105.

[466] E.g. Tiyavanich 124.

[467] Given the historical relapse and nineteenth-century revival from texts of meditative practice in the Theravādin world, there are obvious dangers in relying too heavily on modern practices and ethnographic studies thereof as a guide for guessing about elements of ancient Buddhist practice not directly attested in the texts.

[468] In §2.1.1.1, p. 159.

[469] The most common pericope is the one that occurs as part of the sequence of practice laid out in DN 2, *Sāmaññaphala-sutta,* where a monk, "equipped with Ariyan morality", may "find solitary lodging" anywhere – "at the foot of a tree, in a mountain cave or gorge, a charnel-ground (*susāna*), a jungle-thicket, in the open air or on a heap of straw;" Walshe 101. For further instances, which are too numerous to list exhaustively, see other DN texts that repeat verbatim long chunks of DN 2 on the path, e.g. DN 19, Walshe 308-309; DN 25, Walshe 390, 391; MN 27, Ñāṇamoli 181; MN 38, Ñāṇamoli 359; MN 39, Ñāṇamoli 366, etc., AN 4.20.198, Woodward and Hare II, 225, etc; SuN 958-9, Saddhatissa 111. The same small pericope listing places of ascetic solitary dwelling and practice occurs in various other contexts: e.g. MN 65, Ñāṇamoli 545; MN 122, Ñāṇamoli 976. At MN 107, the path is described in such a way that it is clear that the Tathāgata, as instructor, does not expect a given practice of a monk until the monk has mastered more basic ones, and the sequence makes it clear that one only goes off to such solitary places of practice, including the *susāna*, when virtue, guarding the doors of the sense faculties, moderation in eating, wakefulness, and

is said to have dwelt in a charnel-ground, though during his years of ascetic practice prior to his realisation,[471] and dwelling in charnel-grounds is included among prototypical lists of *dhūṭâṇga* or especially austere ascetic practice.[472] As in later ethnographic accounts, charnel-grounds are also portrayed in the canon as dangerous and fearful places.[473]

Both meditations on charnel-ground corpses[474] and lists that include charnel-grounds as dwelling places for solitary monks,[475] it should be emphasised, are among the oldest material in the canon, so that the core of this complex of material is very old. It seems likely that conquest of death in this form, also, dates right back to the earliest things we know in Buddhism.

Even though it is true that references both to the meditations themselves[476] and stories about their consequences and the vicissitudes of persons undertaking them[477] seem to become more

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mindfulness have already been successively mastered; so too MN 125, Ñāṇamoli 994. This list is so widespread that it is impossible to believe that monks did not put it into practice and actually dwell in such places.

[470] E.g. at AN 3.10.92, the same list of dwelling-places is listed as characteristic of ascetics of *non*-Buddhist views; Woodward and Hare, I, 220.

[471] MN 12, *Mahāsīhanāda-sutta*, "I made my bed in a charnel ground with the bones of the dead for a pillow", Ñāṇamoli 175.

[472] E.g. in a list of nine of the later thirteen *dhūṭaṇga* given already at MN 113, Ñāṇamoli 911.

[473] E.g. AN 5.25.241, where there are five disadvantages to a cemetery (here *sāvathikā*), namely that it is unclean, evil-smelling, fearful, the haunt of bestial *yakkha,* and is the cause of many folk wailing; this is used as a figure for the faults of a person who is like a cemetery, Woodward and Hare III, 195-196; terrors of the charnel ground feature in the narrative of SN 10.8, "Sudatta", Bodhi 311-312.

[474] On the problem of the likely age of the texts containing this notion, Norman says, for example, that the doctrine of the *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna-sutta,* DN 22, "is perhaps the most important [doctrine] after the Aryan Path in early Buddhism, and this *sutta* is the oldest authoritative statement of the doctrine." As with DN 2, the *Sāmaññaphala-sutta,* the antiquity of the materials would seem to be evidenced, also, by the fact that it is repeated verbatim in a number of other *suttas* (MN 10, 119).

[475] This list, as we saw above n. 469, includes DN 2 and parallel *suttas*, on the age of which see the discussion below, p. 1427.

[476] See e.g. the long treatment in Buddhaghosa's *Visuddhimagga,* Ñāṇamoli 185-203.

detailed and frequent in the later record, then,[478] the presence of these elements in the canon arguably suggest that Buddhists were dwelling in charnel-grounds; that charnel-grounds were scary places; and that charnel-grounds were a known site of a recommended meditation on the impurity of the body as that lesson is instantiated in the decaying corpse. Given the circumstantial evidence that DeCaroli adduces that early Buddhism was elaborated in a context that recognised the existence of troubled, dangerous dead, and the modern ethnographic evidence that overcoming the fear of such spirits could grant the meditator power over them, we might suspect that the pattern of association of early Buddhist sites with mortuary sites identified by Schopen, and the further pattern of Buddhist symbolic assertions of greater efficacy in dealing with the dead than mainstream Brahmanical (e.g. Mānava-dharmic) *śraddhā* rites, might be linked to the power of the confrontation with the charnel-ground dead, and the power success in that encounter conjecturally brought to the practitioner.

It seems, conversely, that in identifying only pragmatic and economic motives as likely explanations for the pattern of association of Buddhist and megalithic mortuary sites in archaeology or the conjectured provision of services mediating with the realm of the dead to the laity, both Schopen and DeCaroli have been blind to a very large dimension of possible significance in the material they study. As we have seen above from the evidence of the widespread discourse of *amata* or "undying", the escape from or transcendence of death was

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[477] See e.g. stories cited in Liz Wilson, *Charming Cadavers* from e.g. the *Dhammapadāṭṭhakathā* (82-86, 91-93) and the commentary to ThaG (87-89), which (despite occasional unsupported references to canonical precedent, e.g. 2, 16) are entirely derived from post-canonical sources, as befits Wilson's focus on the commentarial literature. The burgeoning of these tales of the supernatural may be related to the proliferation of the kinds of sources DeCaroli studies, which are also often later than the canon, for the relation between Buddhist monks and spirit-deities like *nāga* and *yakṣa*.

[478] As so often, we must bear in mind that the increase in testimony to a certain aspect of Buddhist discourse, practice etc. in the later record may sometimes be as much a feature of the growing inclusivity of the record itself, especially with the explosion in text that attends the adoption of writing as a significant mnemonic technology, as much as an increase in the actual phenomenon attested to.

certainly a significant soteriological concern in early Buddhism, and Buddhism laid claim to the power to grant exemption from death as a fruit of realisation of its teachings. It may be true, then, that one dimension of a hypothetical early assertion of power over the dangerous spirits of the dead or of special authority over funerary sites might lie in the search for patronage. At the same time, it also seems equally likely that such power and authority could have been asserted as grounded in the victory over death to which Buddhism laid claim in doctrine and practice, and therefore a particularly powerful symbolic articulation of that victory.

2.2.8 Summary

In this section, then, we have surveyed a number of ideas which, between them, show that the conquest or evasion of death was a widespread and powerful theme in early Buddhism, as witness primarily by the Pāli canon, but also by some supporting evidence from slightly later texts, archaeology, and ethnography. From sometime very early in the Pāli-canonical period, Buddhism took up and adopted to its own ends a discourse already attested in the Upaniṣads, and spoke extensively of its *summum bonum* as a state of "undying" (*amata*). It also figured the conquest of death ensuing upon the realisation of the religious goal in narratives about the besting of Māra, death personified. Further, the attainment of an undying state may be a hitherto underacknowledged dimension to the symbolism of the quenching of the flame found in the doctrine of *nibbāna.* These ideas seem most likely to have continued to have currency and resonance throughout the canonical period, as is witnessed not only by their persistence in the textual record, but also by the fact that we see very early in the archaeological record a persistent association between Buddhist and megalithic funerary sites, an association which may also, in its own way, attest to a concern to assert dominion over death. These archaeological hints are supplemented by narrative evidence that Buddhists were contesting efficacy in mediating with the dead with Brahminical *śraddhā* rites, and that accomplished

Buddhist personalities were also understood to have dominion over a range of spirits and supernatural beings, including the spirits of the dead. We have finally coordinated these clues with the presence in the textual tradition, once again from very early on, of evidence of dwelling in and meditating upon the corpses of charnel-grounds, one more sense in which early Buddhists confronted death and strove for mastery of it.

This constellation of ideas and practices has already been related to the problematics of the body above, for example in our observations of the way that recognition of the body's true corruptible and unsatisfactory nature, and consequent disidentification from it, form a central part of early Buddhist meditational practice; or in our passing observation that some of the early texts propose a formula in which certain practitioners "touch the deathless element with their bodies". We will further develop some of these relations with problematics of embodiment below, when we consider the broader relations between the various dimensions of the discourse of embodiment in the early period.

The discourse of conquest or evasion of death in the early materials is also important, however, because it shows that much later ideas about the possibility of realising a corporeal immortality cannot be conceived of as an entirely alien and arbitrary graft on a Buddhism utterly devoid of precedent for such notions. As we noted above, it is true that the discourse of conquest over death in these early materials has no positive bodily ramifications. But it is also surely true that such a widespread understanding of the Buddhist goal as exempt from death must have furnished such notions, when they were elaborated, with fertile ground. In Chapter 5.1 of this dissertation, we will return to this theme, when we trace the emergence, beginning in the early Mahāyāna and coming to a head in the fertile fourth century, of ideas that Buddhas are first

extremely long-lived and then utterly immortal, and where their immortality finds its expression in the idea of the body of adamant (*vajrakāya*).

In the meantime, however, we now turn our attention to the first notion of embodiment found in Buddhism that begins, however tentatively at first, to move in the direction of conceiving of embodiment as anything more than an entirely negative state – the concept of *manomayakāya* or "the body made of mind", which as we shall see was conceived of as a mode of embodiment that was, if not a religious ideal in and of itself, an important vehicle or intermediary step to the realisation of the ideal.

Chapter 2.3 *Manomayakāya*

In this section I will examine the notion of *manomayakāya,* which means literally "body made of mind", and represents the most important special kind of *kāya* I have found in Buddhist doctrinal history. Because of its earliness, and also the frequency and range of meanings with which it is mentioned, it is certainly the most significant term in the Pāli materials for a special kind of *kāya*, though as we shall see it is not usually, for all that, commonly predicated of a Buddha in particular.

In studies of Buddha bodies to date, *manomayakāya* has occasionally been mentioned, but always under the rubric of a likely antecedent for the later Mahāyāna concept of *nairmāṇikakāya.*[479] The concept has not, that I have seen, been studied comprehensively as it appears in the Pāli canon independent of any alleged connections with *nairmāṇikakāya* or the Mahāyāna doctrine of bodies more generally, as it is predicated both of the Buddha *and* of other beings. Yet such a study is worthwhile, and I believe it places the concept of *manomayakāya* as it is rarely applied to the Buddha in Pāli sources in context. The picture that emerges from such study of *manomayakāya* as a possible ideal embodiment in early Buddhism, and its implications for the history of concepts of embodiment, is markedly different from what might be suggested by the offhand notion of a precedent to or "origin of" the *nairmāṇikakāya.*

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[479] Guang, for example, says, "The idea of the *nirmāṇakāya* most likely has its origins in the idea of the mind-made body (*manomayakāya*) found in early Buddhism;" 136. Note that, strangely, despite the fact that he identifies it here as an important precedent for **nirmāṇakāya,* Guang does not mention the concept in his Chapter 1 on the Buddha in the *nikāyas.* This is surely part of his apologetic, rationalising tendency to downplay the supernatural aspects of the *nikāya* Buddha as much as possible.

See also la Vallée Poussin, "Appendice", 764-765. Note that la Vallée Poussin joins here, in a series of suggestive but rather impressionistic leaps, very widely separated texts. He is able to show that the verb *nir/mā* has uses in Sarvāstivādin sources referring to the Buddha's power of manifesting "phantom" bodies; he is also able to show that in the Pāli sources (DN 18), the same verb (*abhinimmā*) is used to refer to Brahmā's visitation to the (lower) Heaven of the Thirty-Three; but he is not able to show any closer connection between **nirmāṇakāya* and *manomayakāya*.

It is worth noting, before broaching the Buddhist materials proper, that as with the concept of *amṛta/amata* examined above, it seems unlikely this notion was elaborated out of whole cloth in early Buddhism, though the Buddhist doctrines associated with it are special.

Kubota Chikara points to a single instance of the notion of *manomaya* in the *Ṛg-veda*: 10.85.10, 12, in the wedding song of Sūryā and Soma, which describes their carriage as "a carriage made of mind".[480] Kubota interprets this to mean roughly that the bride is drawn forward by her joyful expectation, just as a carriage is drawn by its horses; he relates the metaphor resorted to here to the Sanskrit idiom *manoratha,* "mind-carriage", meaning an object of joy or hope.

A concept that resonates in some limited senses with the Buddhist uses of the term is found in the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*'s notion of a kind of "self" or "body" (*ātman*) "made of mind" (*manomaya*).[481] TU 2 expounds five kinds of "self" or "body" (*ātman*) made of different substances: food, lifebreath, mind, perception (*vijñāna*) and bliss respectively. Each successive "self consisting of" food, lifebreath, mind etc. is held to be "different from" the previous one and "lie within" it", and to "suffuse" it completely. Each also has the appearance of a man that corresponds to the manlike appearance of the person within whom these successive selves are

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[480] Kubota, "*Manasu* no torikkustāsei", 21. "Thought was her chariot and the sky was its canopy. The two luminaries were the two carriage animals when Sūryā went into the house . . . . Sūryā mounted a chariot made of thought as she went to her husband"; Doniger 268.

[481] I am grateful to Elon Goldstein for pointing out this reference to me. Kubota Chikara also refers to this passage, "*Manasu* no torikkusutāsei", 24 and n. 26, but he is surely too hasty in stating that it the *ātman* "made of mind" is "identical" (相異ない) with the *manomayâtman* posited by Poṭṭhapāda (for which see below, p. 242 ff.). Earlier, Kubota hints that in the Upaniṣads, *manomaya* loses the association (he thinks) it had in the Vedas with the metaphor of horse and carriage, and is reinterpreted as "one of the structures comprising *brahman, ātman,* or *puruṣa* etc., as they [are used to] indicate the ultimate principle" (究極的な原理を示すブラフマンやアートマンやプルシャ等を構成するひとつの構造として再解釈される), 21. Unfortunately, however, he does not go into any detail, but only promises to treat this point in later work, which, to my knowledge, has not yet been published.

being sought. In the case of the "self made of mind", particularly (TU 2.3), is anatomised as follows:

> "Of this self, the head is simply the Yajus formulas; the right side is the Ṛg verses; the left side is the Sāman chants; the torso (*ātman*) is rules of substitution; and the bottom on which it rests is the Artharva-Āṇgirases."[482]

In TU 3, Bhṛgu, Varuṇa's son, requests teaching about *brahman* of his father, and he is taught to seek it through austerity. He progresses through the idea that *brahman* is to be identified with each of these instances respectively, in each case because they are supposedly what gives birth to beings, and that into which beings pass once more upon death. It is clear seems from the progression of this chapter that each instance is understood to be higher than its antecedent in the series, inasmuch as the realisation of its connection to Brahman follows upon more extensive practice.

The coincidence of terminology between this TU chapter and some Buddhist ideas surrounding the *manomayakāya* makes it likely, in the balance, that the ideas are somewhat related. For example, it is certainly telling that the body made of mind is preceded in the series by a body made of food: as we will see below, it is also true in the Buddhist case that *manomayakāya* is often spoken of in conjunction with, and as a higher realisation than, an ordinary body among whose characteristics is the fact that it is sustained by coarse food. It is also notable that Bhṛgu's progression through the realisation of these various *ātmāni* is attained by *tapas*; while it is not so much the case in Buddhist doctrines (as we will see below) that progress is driven by asceticism *per se,* the fact that progress is occasioned by practice is another notable parallel.

Despite these connections, however, we should not exaggerate the extent of the relation between this TU passage and Buddhist ideas. First, the location of the *manomayâtman* in this

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[482] Olivelle 186.

fivefold schema gives it a very different sense than anything found in the Buddhist texts, and this fivefold schema itself that is not pertinent to Buddhism. Second, and more importantly, however, where the (Pāli) Buddhist *manomayakāya* as a product of practice is most typically (in DN 2 *Sāmaññaphala-sutta* etc.; see below) a product of meditative endeavour deliberately elaborated by a kind of supernatural power (*iddhi/ṛddhi*), the TU version is merely a descriptive if usually hidden *fact*, presumably pre-existent in all persons, which awaits discovery by the correct gnostic insight. Finally, it is also noteworthy that this TU "self consisting of mind" is, alone among the five kinds of "self" discussed, identified with the Vedic corpus (Yajus formulae, Ṛg verses etc.). If anything, this "self" or body anatomised as sacred writ arguably should put us in mind of the Buddhist *dharmakāya,* as I will mention below when we come to briefly consider a few other Brahmanical antecedents and parallels to that concept. Nowhere in the Pāli materials about *manomayakāya,* however, do we find anything remotely similar. On the whole, then, even if this TU concept is a relative of the Buddhist concept of *manomayakāya,* it is a remote one at best.

This TU passage is enough to suggest, however, that Buddhism did not have any monopoly on the idea of a "self" or "body" somehow "made of" mind in the early period. This in itself is an important fact, since it suggests that Buddhism may have simply received the idea as a part of a shared cultural background, regardless of any particular Buddhist spin that may have been put on the concept (as so many others) upon appropriation. This impression is arguably reinforced further by the fact that in the majority of the loci where the notion of *manomayakāya* etc. occurs in the Pāli canon, as studied below, it is usually mentioned in passing, in the manner of a commonly shared assumption; the authors of these texts did not seem to feel any need to explain in much detail the *nature* of a *manomayakāya*, as we would expect were they introducing a novelty.

This TU passage also suggests that possible parallels and antecedents to *manomayakāya* should be searched out more diligently in the Vedic and Upaniṣadic corpus. Careful and comprehensive study of Brahmanical antecedents or parallels to the Buddhist *manomayakāya* unfortunately lies beyond the bounds of what is logistically possible in this study, however, and so I now turn immediately to the examination of the concept as it features in the Pāli canon.

2.3.1 *Manomayakāya* in the Pāli canon

In the Pāli materials, there are nine contexts in which we see ideas about the *manomayakāya,* or closely related concepts like the *manomayâtta,* at play.[483] Some of these uses of the concept seem never to have been discussed at all in the secondary literature; certainly, no scholar to my knowledge has considered them all together, either as an independent problem[484] or in its implications for the narrower problem of the ideal embodiments of the Buddha. The various ways the concept is used can be grouped under three heads: Buddhist practice and attainment, cosmology, and the views of other schools. Divided into these categories, the nine observable aspects of the concept are:

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483 The term *manomaya* occurs occasionally in some other connections also, but these are incidental to our analysis here. For example, on some occasions, the world or that part of its contents that obstruct spiritual progress are characterised as "mind-made" (*manomaya*), e.g. SN 35.5.94, Rhys Davids and Woodward IV, 41, Bodhi 1174; *Dhammapada* 1, "Preceded by mind/ are phenomena,/ led by mind,/ formed by mind (*manomaya*)" (*manopubbaṅgamā dhammā manoseṭṭhā manomayā*), Wallis 3, cf. Mascaró 35; also ThaG 761-762, "Telakāni", Norman I, 74. In this usage, the emphasis would seem to be on what Kubota calls the "trickster nature" of *manas,* as the architect of delusion; see his "*Manasu* no torikkusutāsei". "Manomaya" is also the name of a Pacchekabuddha who is supposed to have dwelt on Mt. Isigili, MN 116, *Isigili-sutta.*

484 Kubota, "*Manasu* no torikkusutāsei", discusses most of these senses (1, 3, 4, 7, 8 and 9; with regard to 2, he treats the story of Kakudha, but does not pay sufficient attention to the doctrine shown to be orthodox at Udāyin's expense in AN 5.17.166, that this is a specific reward of meditative accomplishment in this life; this is probably linked to the fact that he seems to miss the point of the *Nirodha-sutta* Udāyin materials when it is discussed in the **Mahāvibhāṣā,* for which see n. 614 below); but we should note that his study is not conducted in direct connection to doctrines of other bodies. I obtained Kubota's article after I did the bulk of the research for this section.

Buddhist practice and attainment:

(1) it is elaborated at a late stage on the overall path of practice by plural practitioners (not just the Buddha) bound for Arhatship;

(2) it is the post-mortem destiny of disciples who achieve a certain level of attainment;

(3) it is the body in which the Buddha visits Brahmā Heaven;

(4) on one occasion *only,* it is the form in which the Buddha comes to a disciple to teach him.

(5) in at least one instance, rebirth in such a form and such a heaven also seems to be promised to generous laity;

Cosmology:

(6) it is the form in which certain *devas* are incarnated in some heavens;

(7) it is the form in which certain beings are reincarnated in the early part of a *kalpa* in various cosmogonic accounts;

Views of other schools:

(8) it is one of a range of objects of identification that can be mistaken for a self, in a teaching where the Buddha refutes the notion of self;

(9) it is part of one of seven nihilist views refuted by the Buddha in the *Brahmajāla-sutta*.

Of these various uses of the term, only two (1 & 8) have been treated, to my knowledge, in previous discussions of Buddha bodies.

First, then, we will examine the five related senses in which *manomayakāya* features in descriptions of Buddhist practice and attainments.

(1) The best-known meaning of the term *manomayakāya,* which is also the usage that is most certainly very early, the most closely and systematically related to characteristic salvific doctrine, and elaborated in the clearest detail, is a pericope that recurs in a number of places describing the elaboration of a *manomayakāya* as part of a path of practice. The archetypal instance of this pericope is found in the *Sāmaññaphala-sutta,* DN 2. As is well known, this text consists of the replies given by the Tathāgata to King Ajātasattu in response to his persistent questioning about the fruits of the homeless life led by Buddhist renunciates. The text begins from the simplest benefits given by this life, including freedom from onerous worldly obligations, morality, mastery of the senses, mindful and clear awareness, contentment, and so on.[485] It then describes a meditative path and its attainments. On the basis of the attainment of the four *jhānas,* the monk is able to "know and see", and what he knows is the unsatisfactory, material, impermanent nature of his given body (see below). It is at this point in the sequence that the monk thereupon elaborates a different body, the *manomayakāya*:

> "With his mind thus concentrated, purified, and bright, unblemished, free from defects, pliant, malleable, steady, and attained to imperturbability, he directs and inclines it to creating a mind-made body [*manomayaṃ kāyaṃ abhinimminanāya*]. From this body he creates another body, endowed with form, made of the mind [*kāyā aññaṃ kāyaṃ abhinimmināti rūpiṃ manomayaṃ*], complete in all its parts, not inferior in its faculties.[486] Just as if a man were to draw a reed from its sheath. The thought would occur to him: 'This is the sheath, this is the reed. The sheath is one thing, the reed another, but the reed has been drawn out from the sheath.' Or as if a man were to draw a sword from its scabbard. The thought would occur to him: 'This is the sword, this is the scabbard. The sword is one thing, the scabbard another, but the sword has been drawn out from the

[485] Walshe 97-99.

[486] *so evaṃ samāhite citte parisuddhe pariyodāte anaṅgaṇe vigatūpakkilese mudubhūte kammaniye ṭhite āneñjappatte manomayaṃ kāyaṃ abhinimminanāya cittaṃ abhinīharati abhininnāmeti. so imamhā kāyā aññaṃ kāyaṃ abhinimmināti rūpiṃ manomayaṃ sabbaṅgapaccaṅgiṃ ahīnindriyaṃ.*

> scabbard.' Or as if a man were to pull a snake out from its slough.[487] The thought would occur to him: 'This is the snake, this is the slough. The snake is one thing, the slough another, but the snake has been pulled out from the slough.' In the same way — with his mind thus concentrated, purified, and bright, unblemished, free from defects, pliant, malleable, steady, and attained to imperturbability, the monk directs and inclines it to creating a mind-made body. From this body he creates another body, endowed with form, made of the mind, complete in all its parts, not inferior in its faculties."[488]

The text continues to describe how, on the basis of the elaboration of the *manomayakāya,* the monk-adept attains to the superpowers, which enable him to be one or many, to appear and disappear, to pass through fences and walls, to fly, walk on water, to touch the sun and the moon with his hand, and to travel "in the body" even as far as the Brahmā world.[489]

Note that the elaboration of this *manomayakāya* is not, by any means, the ultimate fruit. The monk continues on to attain the super-knowledges, namely clairaudience, knowledge of other minds, knowledge of previous existences, and knowledge of the destiny of all beings.[490] He then (finally?!) turns himself to the destruction of corruptions (*āsavakhaya*), which he attains through insight into the four noble truths (with *āsava* used in place of the more usual *dukkha*), and he is released.[491] This release is the ultimate fruit.

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[487] The image of a snake casting off its slough is used elsewhere in the canon for the act of ridding oneself of worldly emotions, e.g. in SuN 1.1, *Uraga-sutta* (vv. 1-34, Norman 1-3), and *Udāna-varga* and DhP parallels thereto, where it is a repeated refrain; see Norman, *Pāli Lit.,* 64 and n. 216; see also Warder, *Pāli Metre,* 135, for a metrical assessment that this text represents an early phase of metrical development in Pāli poetry. Note also that the snake's discarding of its slough is used at BU 4.4.7 (cited above, p. 205) as a figure for the discarding of the fleshly body by a man who "knows not desire" on ordinary physical death, when "a mortal becomes immortal,/ and attains *brahman* in this world"; Olivelle 65. The image has other uses, however. At *Praśna Upaniṣad* 5.5, "a man who meditates on that highest person by means of this very syllable OṂ . . . . becomes released from evil, just like a snake from its slough;" Olivelle 285. It seems unlikely that these uses of the trope are entirely unrelated to its use here for the image of the elaboration of the *manomayakāya.*

[488] http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/dn/dn.02.0.than.html, unpaginated, accessed November 13, 2006.

[489] Walshe 105-102.

[490] Walshe 105-107.

[491] Walshe 108.

Another point that it is important to note, particularly in light of the common claim that *manomayakāya* is a predecessor of the *nairmāṇikakāya,* that among the superpowers acquired *on the basis of* the *manomayakāya* is the ability to "being one, become many" or "being many, become one" and to "appear and disappear".[492] That is to say, the adept can, on the basis of acquisition of the *manomayakāya,* elaborate, multiply and abolish various physical embodiments at will. These powers amount to the kind of powers of multiple and various manifestation later discussed under the head of the *manomayakāya*, but no secondary scholar has ever observed the distinction made here between these powers and the elaboration of the *manomayakāya* itself. Rather than being identical to any body or bodies produced by these powers, *manomayakāya* is a meditative fruit that precedes the elaboration of such bodies and constitutes a necessary precondition for them.

It is also worth noting, given that this passage is among the earliest material dealing with the *iddhipāda* (*ṛddhipāda,* four bases of supernatural power) that there is *no* mention of the power of prolonging or abandoning life at will. However, as we shall see elsewhere in this study, this power was definitely associated with the *iddhipāda* as early as later layers of the Pāli canon,[493] and the same was extensively held in later texts,[494] where it even entered into standard (expanded) lists of the "ten masteries" (*vaśitatva* etc.) of the Bodhisattva[495] (which lists included

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[492] Walshe 105: *eko'pi hutvā bahudhā hoti bahudhāpi hutvā eko hoti, āvībhāvaṃ tirobhāvaṃ . . .*

[493] As most famously in DN 16, the *Mahā-parinibbāna-sutta*, Rhys Davids II, 110-111, Walshe 246-247, Rhys Davids 121-122, Walshe 251; also DN 26, the *Cakkavatti-sīhanāda-sutta,* Walshe 405.

[494] E.g. AKBh 2.10, VP I, 120-124.

[495] See Edgerton s.v. *vaśitā*; DBh, Rahder 70, *so evaṃ kāyajñānābhinirhāraprāpto vaśavartī bhavati sarvasatveṣu/ āyurvaśitāṃ ca pratilabhate 'nabhilāpyānabhilāpyakalpāyuḥpramāṇādhiṣṭhānatayā/* etc.; *Mahāvastu,* "Ten powers are declared by the Buddha . . . to be the attributes of the Bodhisattvas . . . . power over his own life, and the power of intelligence . . ." etc., Jones I, 234.

items traceable back to the *iddhipāda* lists). The power of control over lifespan is an important part of the background to later doctrines of ideal embodiments, particularly of the Buddha, characterised by unusual longevity and immortality, and in the context of a chronology of doctrines of embodiment, we should therefore note that though this notion in some forms may be early (as witnessed by e.g. the *Mahāparinibbāna-sutta*), it is not found here.

In what follows, I will for the sake of brevity refer to this pericope and the model of *manomayakāya* it presents, as the "snake slough" pericope, ~ model, etc.

As I already mentioned above, the DN 2 iteration of this "snake slough" pericope is archetypical, but the pericope is quite widespread in the canon. It is also found in the repetitions of the DN 2 model of the path found in all remaining *suttas* of the first *vagga* of DN but DN 1;[496] and in MN 77, *Mahā-Sakuludāyi-sutta.*[497] A seemingly related passage is a brief mention in AN 1.14.1, "Pre-eminent ones", which gives a list of disciples who are pre-eminent among the Buddha's followers in one or another accomplishment: the Tathāgata declares, "Chief among my disciples who are skilled in creating forms by mind-power is Culla-Panthaka."[498]

(2) The second connection in which *manomayakāya* is mentioned is as the promised destiny of disciples who achieve a certain level of attainment. Because the fate that is promised these disciples is essentially a rebirth among gods of the types just discussed, this dimension of the concept is closely related to the previous two. In fact, we have already seen this association, when the passage from Nandiya states that *devas* of the type of whom we should be mindful

[496] For a full list, see n. 291.

[497] Horner II, 217-218, Ñāṇamoli 643.

[498] Woodward, I, 17; *etad aggaṃ bhikkhave mama sāvakānaṃ bhikkhūnaṃ manomayaṃ kāyaṃ abhinimmiṇantānaṃ yadidaṃ cullapanthako.*

"observe in the self nothing more to do, no need for repeating what is done;" this attainment of the *devas* is explicitly linked to similar attainments in monks: "Just as, Nandiya, a monk who is definitely released observes in the self no more to do, observes no need for repeating what is done, even so, Nandiya, whatsoever devas . . ."[499]

The text that states most clearly the promise of this destiny for accomplished monks in particular is AN 5.17.166, on "Ending" (*nirodha*). This text portrays a dispute that arises between Sāriputta and Udāyin, and the way the Bhagavan resolves it. The dispute begins when Sāriputta teaches that:

> "A monk who has achieved virtue, achieved concentration, achieved insight, may both completely enter the ending of perception and feeling (*saññāvedayitanirodha*) and may emerge therefrom – this is so: if here among the visible things he make not the gain of gnosis, he will surely go beyond the deva-community that feed on solid food and arise in a mind-pictured body (*manomayakāya*), provided he enter and emerge from the ending of perception and feeling – this is so."[500]

Udāyin, however, disagrees three times, and humiliates Sāriputta in the face of the assembly, who remain silent and do not come to Sāriputta's aid. The two of them take their dispute before the Buddha, where they repeat the same claims thrice each. The Buddha then addresses Udāyin:

> "But who, do you hold, Udāyin, has a mind-pictured body?"[501]
>
> "Those devas, lord, who are formless, perception-made (*arūpī saññāmayā*)."[502]

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[499] See above, n. 522.

[500] Woodward and Hare, III, 141: *idhāvuso, bhikkhu sīlasampanno samādhisampanno paññāsampanno saññāvedayitanirodhaṃ samāpajjeyyapi vuṭṭhaheyyapi atthetaṃ ṭhānaṃ. no ce diṭṭheva dhamme aññaṃ ārādheyya, atikkammeva kabaliṅkārāhārabhakkhānaṃ devānaṃ sahavyataṃ aññataraṃ manomayaṃ kāyaṃ upapanno saññāvedayitanirodhaṃ samāpajjeyyapi vuṭṭhaheyyapi atthetaṃ ṭhānanti.*

[501] *kaṃ pana tvaṃ udāyī, manomayaṃ kāyaṃ paccesī'ti.*

[502] *ye te bhante devā arūpino saññāmayāti.*

Clearly this is the wrong answer, as we can easily understand from passages above that show clearly that *manomayakāya* is consistently associated with the *rūpadhātu* (we will see below that *saññāmaya,* as predicated of *kāya, attabhāva* etc., is characteristic of the *ārūpyadhātu* in a limited number of texts, a fact that only makes Udāyin's mistake here more of a howler than ever):

> "Why thinkest thou, Udāyin, that the word of a witless fool like thee is just the thing to declare?"

The Buddha then scolds Ānanda for not sticking up for Sāriputta, and affirms (with a verbatim repetition) that what he has said is correct.[503] It seems that the overall gist of the story is to affirm that a monk who is doctrinally correct ought to be supported in a dispute with another monk in the face of the assembly, and the doctrine about *manomayakāya* is merely adduced as an example; indeed, it is possible, given that Udāyin is being set up as a fall guy with the most transparently idiotic opinions of all, that it is chosen as a particularly obvious piece of doctrine that nobody would ordinarily get wrong, and was thus held as a piece of especially common knowledge. In any case, though the *manomayakāya* doctrine is incidental to the main point of the story here, it is clear from this text that it was orthodox opinion that a monk who had progressed through the meditative curriculum here outlined to the cessation of *saṃjñā* and *vedanā* was guaranteed rebirth in the *rūpadhātu,* among *devas,* and in a *manomayakāya*.[504]

This same doctrine is given almost inadvertent support in DN 18, *Janavasabha-sutta* (though the term *manomaya* is not used there). Not all the dimensions of this complex story are relevant for us here, but at one point, the Buddha is portrayed as receiving intelligence of the Heaven of the Thirty-Three from a *yakkha* (eponymous with the *sutta* itself) called Janavasabha. Janavasabha explains that on a certain occasion the devas of the Heaven of the Thirty-Three were glad,

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[503] Woodward and Hare, III, 143.

[504] See below, esp. n. 614, for discussion of this text in the **Mahāvibhāṣā*.

because their numbers were increasing (over those of the *asuras*). It turns out that the reason for this growth in numbers is the arrival of "new-come devas, fair and glorious/ Who've lived the holy life, now well reborn./ Outshining all the rest in fame and splendour/ The mighty Sage [i.e. the Buddha]'s pupils [were] singled out."[505] In other words, the numbers are being swelled by those who were accomplished disciples of the Buddha in a former life. As no less than Brahmā Sanaṃkumāra himself explains,

> "Since the Lord, out of compassion for the world and for the benefit and happiness of the many, has acted to the advantage of devas and mankind, those, whoever they may be, who have taken refuge in the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha and have observed the moral precepts, have, at death and the breaking-up of the body, arisen in the company of the Parinimitta-Vasavatti devas, or the Nimmānaratti devas, or the Tusita devas, or the Yāma devas, or in the retinue of the Thirty-Three Gods, or of the Four Great Kinds – or at the very least in the company of the *gandhabbas*."[506]

Similarly, in the *Cullavagga,* VII.1.4-5, of the *Vinaya,* it is said that Kakudha the Koliyan, the attendant of Moggallāna, "had just died and had arisen in a certain mind-made body (*manomayaṃ kāyaṃ upapanno*).[507] His body (*attabhāva*[508]) so created is very large. He appears to warn Moggallāna of Devadatta's plan to usurp leadership of the *saṃgha*. Moggallāna goes to the Buddha and repeats the warning, repeating in the process the assertion of the fact that the ghostly form in which he appears is a mind-made body.[509] This story is also told, and the notion of *manomayakāya* occurs once more in it, at AN 5.10.100, "Kakudha".[510]

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[505] Walshe 294.

[506] Walshe 296.

[507] Refer also to AN iii, 192.

[508] Glossed at AA iii, 227 as *sarīra.*

[509] Horner, *Book of the Discipline,* V, 260-261.

[510] Woodward and Hare, III, 95-97.

Though the term *manomayakāya* is not used in this connection, we should also note that the path that includes the "snake slough" model of *manomayakāya* also contains a doctrine that agrees with this doctrine that accomplished disciples have such a rebirth. One of the superknowledges the adept acquires is the "knowledge of the passing away and arising of beings", and on this basis, the adept is said to know that certain "beings, on account of good conduct of body, speech or thought, of praising the Noble Ones, have right view and will reap the kammic reward of right view. At the breaking-up of the body after death they are reborn in a good destination, a heavenly world."[511]

(3) The third association in which *manomayakāya* arises in the canon is where it is the body in which the Buddha visits Brahmā Heaven. As Kubota points out, given the idea that any master of the supernatural powers and superknowledges has the power to do this, it could be regarded as a matter of course that the Buddha himself has done so,[512] but the only explicit source that states this notion that I know if is SN 51.7.3.2, "The Iron Ball", from a collection called "On the Bases of Psychic Power", *Iddhipāda-saṃyutta*.[513] Ānanda asks the Buddha, "Does the Blessed One recall ever having gone to the brahmā world by spiritual power with a mind-made body (*abhijānāti nu kho bhante, bhagavā iddhiyā manomayena kāyena brahmalokaṃ upasaṇkamitā*)" The Buddha replies, "I recall, Ānanda, having gone to the brahmā world by spiritual power with a mind-made body."[514] This is obviously related to the uses just examined, whereby

[511] Walshe 107.

[512] Kubota, "*Manasu* no torikkusutāsei", 24.

[513] Rhys Davids and Woodward, V, 252-253; Bodhi 1740-1742.

[514] La Vallée Poussin tries, somewhat unconvincingly, to link this to the assumption by Sanaṃkumāra of a different kind of body when he visits the Heaven of the Thirty-Three (see n. 479); the biggest sticking-points for this interpretation are (1) the Buddha assumes his *manomayakāya* to *ascend*; (2) he goes beyond the *rūpadhātu,* all the way to the Brahmā heavens; (3) Sanaṃkumāra's form is specifically stated to be *oḷārika,* and as we shall see below, this term is in other places *opposed* to *manomaya*.

manomayakāya is predicated of gods in elevated heavens, monks who by their spiritual attainments have joined them, and beings in a rarefied, early stage of the cosmogony; here, too, the Buddha is travelling by his powers in relatively rarefied realms. This passage is noteworthy, however, because of the explicit association of *manomayakāya* with the Buddha, as opposed to just any "ordinary" adept (if that is not a contradiction in terms!); however, as I will note also with regard to (8) below, these instances are as notable for their rarity as for any precedent they provide for the notion of regular *buddhakāya* in later, Mahāyāna materials.

(4) Fourth among the various applications of the concept of *manomayakāya* is that found in a remarkable passage in which the Buddha comes to a disciple to teach him in the form of a *manomayakāya*. The disciple in question is Anuruddha. In his verses in the *Theragāthā,* he describes the process that led to his Arhatship, and in this description we read,

> "Knowing my intention the teacher, unsurpassed in the world, by his supernormal power approached me with body made of mind."[515]

This same verse is repeated in AN 8.3.30, "The venerable Anuruddha".[516]

It is difficult to know what about this verse should astonish us most. First, it is the only case I know of in the entire Pāli canon in which the Buddha assumes a *manomayakāya* specifically for the purpose of teaching –bodies that are also elaborated precisely in order to teach. This makes it, I believe, the closest prolepsis of Mahāyāna bodies-for-teaching in the Pāli corpus. Second, however, despite the fact that all secondary scholarship on Buddhist bodies in general to date that I have examined seems *only* interested in the *manomayakāya* in the Pāli canon as a putative

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[515] ThaG 901, Norman I, 85: *mama saṅkappamaññāya satthā loke anuttaro/ manomayena kāyena iddhiyā upasaṅkami.*

[516] Woodward and Hare, IV, 160.

antecedent to Mahāyāna *kāya* doctrines, *none* ever cites this passage.[517] Third, *pace* the overwhelming impression conveyed by the secondary literature that *manomayakāya* is not only an antecedent to later notions of *kāya* but that it is only of interest as such an antecedent, when we consider this one passage against the mass of evidence just examined for a range of other important applications of the concept in Pāli literature, the lesson is surely precisely opposite to the impression conveyed by previous secondary scholars: whatever the significance of *manomayakāya* in the Pāli materials, it is only *most rarely* related even remotely to later Mahāyāna doctrines.

(5) Fifth among these various applications of the notion of *manomayakāya,* we find at least one instance of rebirth in such a form and such a heaven also seems to be promised to generous Buddhist laity. This is in AN 5.5.44, "The Giver of Good Things". A layman called Ugga gives lavish gifts to the Buddha, including not just luxurious foods but also a couch with gorgeous and opulent cloth, deer-skins, awning etc., and also a very expensive sandalwood plank, all of which the Exalted One accepts out of pity. Then, we read that "in due course Ugga the householder died and thereafter *arose in a certain inferable world* (*manomayaṃ kāyaṃ*)."[518] As a "deva" he visits the Blessed One. The Buddha asks him, "I hope, Ugga, things are with you as we hoped?" "To be sure, lord, things are as the Exalted One hoped."[519] The Buddha then addresses verses to him, saying that "Who gives the good shall gain the good." The moral of the *sutta* is clearly that *dāna* reaps merit; Ugga is a layperson who has been extremely generous with his alms. The interest for our purposes, however, lies in the fact that Ugga is portrayed as

[517] Kubota Chikara does cite it, "*Manasu* no torikkusutāsei", 24.

[518] Woodward and Hare III, 42. Hare gives an entirely useless note to this translation. *kālakato ca uggo gahapati vesāliko aññataraṃ manomayaṃ kāyaṃ upapajjī.*

[519] *'kacci te ugga yathādhippāyo'ti 'taggha me bhante yathādhippāyo'ti.*

having had access to a realm of post-mortem reincarnational well-being that elsewhere, as we saw, is promised to highly accomplished meditative monks.[520]

These, then, are the various senses in which the elaboration or attainment of a *manomayakāya* are held to be part of, or the fruit of, Buddhist practices. We now turn to other senses in which the concept occasionally features in the texts, beginning with two doctrines in which it plays a part in Buddhist ideas of cosmogony and cosmology.

(6) The sixth connection in which *manomayakāya* features in the Pāli materials is where it is supposed to be the form in which certain *devas* are incarnated in some heavens. The only detailed and dedicated passage I know of in this regard is AN 11.2.13, "Nandiya". Nandiya asks the Buddha, "In whose way of living should we live"? He is instructed that the correct way of life involves a series of elements, including being a believer, being virtuous, of ardent energy, of fixed mindfulness, being composed, and being strong in insight. Then he is instructed in a series of *smṛti* or "recollections", including to be mindful of or recollect the Tathāgata as an arahant; to be mindful of the *dhamma;* to be mindful of "lovely friends" (*kalyānamitrāni*); of "his own liberality" (*attano cāgam*); and to be mindful of the *devas.* Here is where we see the doctrine of *manomayakāya* as it relates to *devas* (who, let us note, are, in their inclusion in this list of objects of *smṛti,* figured as spiritual goods). The specific instruction with regard to the devas is:

> "You should recollect the devas thus: Whatsoever devas, passing beyond the company of those devas who subsist on food material, do rise up again in a certain mind-made body (*manomayaṃ kāyaṃ upapannā*)[521] – such devas observe in the self nothing more to do, no need for repeating what is done. Just as, Nandiya, a monk who is definitely released observes in the self no more to do, observes no need for repeating what is

[520] We might also note in this connection the fact that Janavasabha, the Buddha's source of intelligence about the Heaven of the Thirty-Three in the eponymous DN 18, is a reincarnation of Bimbisāra.

[521] *'yā devatā atikkammeva kabaliṅkārāhārabhakkhānaṃ devānaṃ sahavyataṃ aññataraṃ manomayaṃ kāyaṃ upapannā.*

> done, even so, Nandiya, whatsoever devas, passing beyond the company of those devas who subsist on food material, do rise up again in a certain mind-made body . . ."[522]

As is clear from other passages (discussed below) that speak of "passing beyond the company of those *devas* who subsist on food material", the *devas* spoken of here are conceived of specifically as denizens of the *rūpadhātu*.[523]

(7) Closely related to this sixth application of the concept of *manomayakāya* is a seventh, where *manomaya*[-*kāya*] is the form in which certain beings are reincarnated in the transitional stage at the beginning of a *kalpa* in cosmogonic accounts.[524] Here again, as with the "snake slough" pericope, we are dealing with a pericope which recurs verbatim a number of times in different parts of the canon. For example, in DN 1, *Brahmajāla-sutta,* it is said that at a certain intermediate time between *kalpas,* almost all beings are reborn in the World of Radiance, "and there they dwell made of mind (*manomaya*), feeding on joy, radiating light from themselves, and traversing the air, continuing in glory".[525] This same pericope is repeated in DN 24, the cosmogonic *Pāṭika-sutta*;[526] DN 27, *Aggañña-sutta*;[527] and in AN 10.3.29, "The Kosalan".[528]

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[522] Woodward and Hare, V, 215-216.

[523] In the tripartite Buddhist cosmological scheme comprising *kāmadhātu* or "the realm of desire", being the earthly, ordinary realm here below where we mortals dwell; *rūpadhātu,* or a "realm of [mere] form", where beings lead a more rarefied and pure existence in certain heavens; and the even more rarefied *ārūpyadhātu* or "formless realm".

[524] Kubota characterises this idea as a kind of *antarābhava* 中有 writ large on the cosmic scale; "*Manasu* no torikkusutāsei", 25.

[525] Rhys Davids I, 30: *saṃvaṭṭamāne loke yebhuyyena sattā ābhassarasaṃvattanikā honti. te tattha honti manomayā pītibhakkhā sayampabhā antalikkhacarā subhaṭṭhāyino ciraṃ dīghamaddhānaṃ tiṭṭhanti.* We find this same pericope, with subtle variations, in Sanskrit in the *Mahāvastu*: *te bhavanti svayaṃprabhāḥ antarīkṣacarā manomayā prītibhakṣāḥ sukhasthāyino yenakāmaṃgatāḥ dharmatā khalu,* corresponding to Jones I, 285.

[526] Rhys Davids III, 26.

[527] Rhys Davids III, 81-82; these same beings recall this golden age at III, 86. Pande considers this *sutta* late, following Winternitz; Pande 111. He assigns DN 24 to the same chronological stratum, 115.

Finally, in addition to these contexts in which *manomayakāya* is related to Buddhist practice or attainment and ideas about cosmology, we find two contexts in which it features in non-Buddhist doctrines disputed by the Buddha.

(8) Eighth among the doctrines about *manomayakāya,* we find it is one of a range of objects of identification that can be mistaken for a self, in a teaching where the Buddha refutes the notion of self. The most notable and celebrated instance of this kind is DN 9, the *Poṭṭhapāda sutta.* In this text, the concept of *manomayakāya* is *not* found in the same form in which it appears in the DN 2 "snake slough" pericope studied above, despite the fact that DN 9 begins elaborating the same meditative curriculum as DN 2 and like texts.[529] Rather, at the crucial point in the sequence – following on the four *jhānas* – the curriculum strikes out on a different tangent. First, we get the higher sequence of the sphere of infinite space, the sphere of infinite consciousness, the sphere of nothingness, and finally, absolute cessation.[530] Then, we are presented with a dialogue between the Buddha and Poṭṭhapāda that seeks primarily to clarify the differences between Buddhist doctrines and certain non-Buddhist doctrines. First, for a couple of paragraphs, the talk revolves around the relation of the "summit of perception" and its relation to knowledge. Then, however, Poṭṭhapāda asks whether perception is identical to the self or not, and the Buddha begins to interrogate him on his concept of self.

It is only after this apparent detour that we return, in some sense, to the order of the DN 2 curriculum (which contained the "snake slough" model). Poṭṭhapāda posits three possible

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[528] Woodward and Hare, V, 41.

[529] Walshe 161-162.

[530] Walshe 162-163.

kinds of self. The first is a "gross (*oḷārika*) self, material, composed of the four elements, feeding on physical food,"[531] and corresponds loosely to the ordinary given body, upon the dissatisfactory nature of which meditation is prescribed in DN 2. Here, however, instead of considerations about its intrinsic inadequacies, the text prefers simply to dialectically refute the possibility of identifying it with perception as a candidate for the status of "self". The second kind of self is a "mind-made self complete in all its parts, not inferior in its faculties,"[532] and once again, the only concern of the text is to deconstruct the putative identity with perception of this "self". The third kind of self mooted to the Buddha by Poṭṭhapāda is " a formless self made of perception;"[533] which suffers the same dialectical fate.[534] A little further on, the Buddha returns to this theme, and asserts that these kinds of self are "acquired" selves (*attapaṭilābha*), and it is for their abandonment that the *dharma* is taught.

In this passage from DN 9 *Poṭṭhapāda-sutta,* then, we see some striking differences in the concept of *manomayakāya* from that found in DN 2 *Sāmaññphala-sutta*.[535] Where in the DN 2 "snake slough" model the *manomayakāya* is an indispensable step in the meditative curriculum and seems clearly to serve as the basis for the elaboration of further superpowers, in DN 9 **manomaya-atta* features only, in its role as an object of identification with a false notion of "self", as a mistake to be abandoned. It is even put in the mouth of an instructee who is clearly enamoured of certain non-Buddhist "heresies" (as some scholars like to call them). The overall

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[531] *oḷāriko . . . rūpī cātummahābhūtiko kabalīkārāhārabhakkho.*

[532] *manomayaṃ . . . . attānaṃ . . . sabbaṅga paccaṅgiṃ ahīnindriyanti.*

[533] *arūpiṃ . . . attānaṃ . . . saññāmayanti.*

[534] Walshe 163-164.

[535] These stark differences belie the presentation in Pande (91), where he seems to suggest that what is going on is merely a slight modification of the same basic model as found in DN 2. See the section on **oḷārikakāya* below for further discussion.

soteriological model, and the content of realisation it puts forth, seems further to differ in some fundamental aspects from the DN 2 model. Where in DN 2 a key role is played by disillusionment with the inadequate given body, the acquisition of superpowers, and the realisation of the four noble truths, none of these feature at all in DN 9; rather, the key to liberatory insight seems to lie entirely in a discursive understanding of *anātman*, one that moreover seems much more gnostic and much less thaumaturgic in its overall tone. Even allowing for the difference in emphasis that might be conditioned by a narrative frame in which the Buddha is polemicising against opponent positions (Poṭṭhapāda) rather than preaching to a sympathetic wealthy lay patron (Ajātasattu), it is striking to see that these stark differences grafted onto the end of a path that is identical in its outset. It is almost as if DN 9 is deliberately attempting to hijack the model of DN 2 and harness it to the polemical exposition of a new or alternative model.[536]

(9) If these differences between the model and function of *manomayakāya/-atta* in the two texts have been too little observed, however, it has still less been noted that the DN 9 model is almost unique in the canon. The only other passage that resembles it,[537] to my knowledge, is a passage in DN 1, *Brahmajāla-sutta,* where the Buddha refutes seven kinds of nihilist doctrine. These form a gradated series, in which the first kind of nihilist posits a self that is material and made up of the four elements, and then successive nihilists through the list posit ever-more rarefied forms of self, until the seventh self is one that "has realised the Sphere of Neither Perception-Nor-Non-Perception"; all seven, however, proclaim that whatever self they propound "at the

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[536] This assumes, of course, that if the two differ in age, DN 2 is earlier: this conforms with general opinion in the field, however, as I will note below; and it is also to be noted that the four noble truths and superpowers seem to be as old as anything we can identify in the canon, lending support to the idea that DN 2 could not be later than anything.

[537] See, however, also the other two isolated instances of the related *saññāmaya* noted below.

breaking-up of the body is annihilated and perishes, and does not exist after death".[538] The first proposes that *atta* has form and dwells in the *kāmadhātu,* where it feeds on solid food, etc.; the third kind of view, however, holds that

> "There is a further soul (*atta*) – divine, having form, made of mind (*manomaya*), with all its major and minor parts complete, not deficient in any organ.[539] This you neither know nor perceive . . ."[540]

As the text proceeds to describe still further nihilist views of *atta* propounded by certain teachers, we are told that in each case, "the Tathāgata, however, knows much beyond this."[541] Clearly, the overall point is the same as in DN 9; these various realms may exist and it may be possible to dwell in them, but the aspect of a being that dwells in them is not to be mistakenly identified as a "self" (*atta*).

Before we leave our survey of the various senses in which the doctrine of *manomayakāya* features in the Pāli canon, we must, finally, examine one difficult text, though it is difficult to know exactly what to think of it. I am referring to MN 60, the *Apaṇṇaka-sutta*. In this text, the Buddha is concerned to refute the unjustified surety of some recluses and Brahmins who hold to a doctrine that there definitely are, or are not, immaterial realms. He seems to say that he cannot be sure either way, and without direct knowledge, the will not take a definitive stance; an alternative interpretation is that the question of the existence of such realms is here being treated as one of those topics on which a definitive dogmatic stance "tends not to edification". He says,

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[538] Walshe 84-85.

[539] *attā dibbo rūpī manomayo sabbaṅgapaccaṅgī ahīnindriyo*. Note the close parallel in wording with the description of the *manomayakāya* elaborated by the Buddhist practitioner in DN 2, 9, etc.; the same wording is also used by Poṭṭhapāda.

[540] Rhys Davids I, 47: *atthi kho bho añño attā dibbo rūpī manomayo sabbaṅgapaccaṅgī ahīnindriyo. taṃ tvaṃ na jānāsi na passasi . . .*

[541] Rhys Davids I, 47-49.

> "Now as to the recluses and brahmins who hold the doctrine and view 'there definitely are no immaterial realms', if their word is true then it is certainly still possible that I might reappear [after death] among the gods of the fine-material realms who consist of mind (*devā rūpino manomayā*). But as to the recluses and brahmins who hold the doctrine and view 'there definitely are immaterial realms', if their word is true then it is certainly still possible that I might reappear [after death] among the gods of the immaterial realms who consist of perception (*devā arūpino saññamayā*)."[542]

He goes on to draw the lesson that dispute in this worldly realm over the things of other worlds is pointless.

Whether the Buddha's reticence on this question is because he does not really know, or because he knows but holds that making a firm pronouncement on the topic will only lead his listeners astray, the stance thus taken in the *Apaṇṇaka-sutta* is puzzling in light of the fact that so many other texts are clearly willing to posit both *rūpa-* and *ārūpya* realms, and the various kinds of bodies and denizens that go with them. However we interpret it, this stance marks the *Apaṇṇaka-sutta* out as quite unusual among the various texts that treat *manomayakāya* and related concepts in the Pāli canon.

Thus far, we have surveyed at least eight conceptions of the *manomayakāya,* or applications of that notion, in the Pāli canon (nine, if we count the anomalous MN 60 *Apaṇṇaka-sutta*).[543] It

[542] Ñāṇamoli 516: *ye kho te bhonto samaṇabrāhmaṇā evaṃ vādino evaṃdiṭṭhino 'natthi sabbaso āruppā'ti. sace tesaṃ bhavataṃ samaṇabrāhmaṇānaṃ saccaṃ vacanaṃ. thānam etaṃ vijjati. ye te devā rūpino manomayā apaṇṇakamme tatruppatti bhavissati. ye pana te bhonto samaṇabrāhmaṇā evaṃ vādino evaṃ diṭṭhino 'atthi sabbaso āruppā'ti. sace tesaṃ bhavataṃ samaṇabrāhmaṇānaṃ saccaṃ vacanaṃ. thānam etaṃ vijjati ye te devā arūpino saññāmayā, apaṇṇakamme tatruppatti bhavissati.*

[543] Beyond the Pāli materials but still in "Mainstream" sources, Fukuhara Ryōgon ("Tenshō no riron", 461) mentions a passage in the *Saṃyuktâgama* where it seems the *manomayakāya* is understood as the medium of transmigration: "When the life of a sentient being in this world is ended, *it is carried by the manomayakāya* to be reborn in another place . . ." (佛告婆蹉。眾生於此處命終。乘意生身生於餘處。當於爾時。因愛故取。因愛而住。故說有餘; T99.244b03-05). Though this text as a whole corresponds to SN 44.9, the Pāli version does not include this notion: *yasmiṃ kho vaccha samaye imañca kāyaṃ nikkhipati, satto ca aññataraṃ kāyaṃ anuppanno hoti, tamahaṃ taṇhūpādānaṃ vadāmi. taṇhāhissa vaccha tasmiṃ samaye upādānaṃ hotīti*; Woodward translates, "At that time, Vaccha, when a being lays aside this body and rises up again in another body, for that I declare craving to be the fuel. Indeed, Vaccha, craving is on that occasion the fuel;" Rhys Davids and Woodward IV, 281.

remains for us to consider certain related locutions occasionally used to describe types of body in the same contexts as discussions of the *manomayakāya*, some of which have occasionally been described in the secondary literature as kinds of bodies in opposition to *manomayakāya,* in order to gain a clearer conception of the specific senses in which *manomayakāya* as a special kind of body is indeed special.

2.3.2 Other mooted or minor terms for kinds of body in the Pāli materials: *oḷārika* and *saññāmaya*

Let us first consider the term **oḷārika-atta* "a gross self",[544] which we have already encountered above in our discussion of DN 9, the *Poṭṭhapāda-sutta*. In his summary of DN 9, Pande claims that a contrast between *manomaya-attā* (Skt. *manomayâtman*) and (*)*oḷārika-attā* is characteristic not only of this *sutta* (which is correct, but for a different context, not for the summary of the meditative path), but also of DN 2, the *Sāmaññaphala-sutta.*[545] This suggests the possibility that *manomayakāya* is systematically opposed, in these texts, to *oḷārikakāya* as a different *kind* of body, and thus that we may have some precedent for the notion of multiple coordinated possibilities of embodiment. Unfortunately, on closer scrutiny, it seems clear that this claim is part of Pande's failure to notice the significant differences between the schema of these two texts,[546] and that he is basically projecting aspects of the schema of DN 9 onto the somewhat different schema of DN 2. The term used in DN 9, *oḷāriko attapaṭilabho,* does not occur in any form in DN 2; indeed, as we noted above, even in DN 9, it occurs only in the dialogue with Poṭṭhapāda about the kinds of self he posits, and thus features as a foil doctrine portrayed as

[544] *Oḷārika* is defined in the PTS *Pāli-English Dictionary* as "gross, coarse, material, ample"; from *uḷāra,* "great, eminent, excellent, superb, lofty, noble, rich"; corresponding to Sanskrit *udāra, audārika* (see e.g. Edgerton, s.v.; see below for discussion of some of Edgerton's examples).

[545] Pande 89.

[546] Already mentioned above; see above, n. 535.

mistaken, not as part of warranted Buddhist orthodoxy. Further, DN 9 consistently speaks thus in terms of *atta* and *attapaṭilabha,* not in terms of *~*kāya*; in DN 2, by contrast, the talk is clearly of *manomayakāya,* and we would therefore expect **oḷārikakāya,* if anything, if these were indeed the contrast being posited. The term **oḷārikakāya,* however, occurs nowhere in the canon. Finally, as we have already observed, the context for the mention of *oḷāriko attapaṭilabho* and *manomayo attapaṭilabho* in DN 9 is a *threefold* rubric, which also includes *saññāmayo attapaṭilabho*, whereas nothing "made of *saññā*" occurs at all in DN 2. Pande acknowledges this point, but speaks of it as if DN 9 makes nothing more than a minor adjustment to the DN 2 schema, which is otherwise left intact; I think, however, for reasons argued above, that it is more accurate to see these differences as deep and significant, and part of a fundamentally different thrust and even a different soteriological vision in this *sutta.*

Indeed, aside from this single passage in DN 9, I can find no passage in the Pāli canon in which *oḷārika* is even predicated of *kāya*, nor are there indeed many passages where there is any particularly close connection between discussion of what is *oḷārika* and bodies *per se*. There are some minor exceptions to this pattern.

For example, MN 102, the *Pañcattaya-sutta,* presents a series of complex disagreements between the doctrine of the Tathāgata and the systems and teachings of certain "recluses and brahmans" who "lay down that after dying, the self, unimpaired, perceives" or "does not perceive" or "neither perceives nor does not perceive"; also, that after death, this post-mortem self "has form . . . has not form . . . both has and has not form . . . neither has not has not form;" and so on.[547] The Tathāgata, it is emphasised, understands all these various positions, but knows them also to be false, and his various correctives to these doctrines are presented

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[547] Horner III, 16 ff.

sequentially, including e.g. the understanding that there is nothing apart from the five *skandhas* that comes, goes, arises, passes away, etc.;[548] that the attainment of this "plane" (*āyatana*) of complete release is not possible through relation to conditioned (*saṇkhāra*) objects of experience;[549] that for so long as such recluses and brahmans are in the grip of false views of eternalism etc., they will not be able to utterly purify their knowledge;[550] etc. The exposition of each of these correctives is followed by the repeated refrain of this *sutta*:

> "Knowing that what is constructed is gross-material (*oḷārika*), but that there is this that is the stopping of the constructions (*saṇkhārānaṃ nirodho*), the Tathāgata, seeing the escape from it, has gone beyond it."

In other words, the term *oḷārika* is being applied to the entire realm of conditioned things (*saṃskāradharma*). In the midst of this exposition, as a description of one of the mistaken perspectives the Tathāgata sees beyond, we are told that there are

> " . . . recluses and brahmans . . . . [who,] afraid of their own body, loathing their own body, simply keep running and circling round their own body (*sakkāyabhayā sakkāyaparijegucchā sakkāyaññeva anuparidhāvanti, anuparivattanti*). Just as a dog that is tied by a leash to a strong post or stake keeps running and circling round that post or stake, so do these worthy recluses and brahmans, afraid of their own body, loathing their own body, simply keep running and circling around their own body. Knowing that what is constructed is gross-material (*oḷārika*), but that there is this that is the stopping of the constructions (*saṇkhārānaṃ nirodho*), the Tathāgata, seeing the escape from it, has gone beyond it."[551]

The main point seems to be to show that utter rejection of the body in a quest for some utterly unconditioned beyond is futile and counterproductive. Though the connection here between the *oḷārika* and the body is not direct, it does list the body among the things of the conditioned (*saṇkhāra*) gross material (*oḷārika*) realm that the Tathāgata has transcended by his gnostic

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[548] Horner III, 18.

[549] Horner III, 18.

[550] Horner III, 19-20.

[551] Horner III, 18-19.

insight. We at least know thereby that there is no special contradiction in speaking of the (ordinary, conditioned) body as *oḷārika.*

Again, in DN 18, the *Janavasabha-sutta,* already discussed above,[552] the great god Brahmā Sanaṃkumāra deigns to descend to the Heaven of the Thirty-Three to visit the gods there and tell them about the Buddha's teaching, and in order to do so, the text tells us that he has to "assume a grosser form" (*oḷārikam attabhāvam abhinimminitvā pātubhavati*).[553] This passage is of interest, in fact, precisely because it shows us how *ad hoc* the application of *oḷārika* to embodiments is in the canon: in this case, logically, given the nature of the Heaven in question, the adjective must apply precisely to *manomayakāya,* which elsewhere (e.g. in DN 9) is systematically *opposed* to *oḷārika* embodiments.

We see, therefore, that there is no specific term for an **oḷārikakāya* articulated with *manomayakāya* in the texts; that *oḷārika,* even as a plain adjective, is only rarely associated with forms of embodiment; and that on those rare occasions where it is predicated of the body, the discourse seems entirely *ad hoc* and not underlain by any regular or orthodox doctrine. There is, therefore, no justification for treating it as a technical term, or imagining any systematic Buddhist doctrine of such a body.

The same is also true of the third term in Poṭṭhapāda's DN 9 tripartite typology of "self", *saññāmayo . . . arūpī attapaṭilabho,* translatable (perhaps very roughly) as "a person/body made of

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[552] See §2.3.1, item (2), i.e. p. 235.

[553] Rhys Davids II, 244; Walshe 294.

formless conception".[554] This notion is not found in DN 2 at all; in fact, it is very rare in the Pāli canon as a whole. We have already encountered both the other passages in which it occurs in our treatment of *manomayakāya* above. First, as we saw, in difficult and puzzling MN 60 (*Apaṇṇaka-sutta*), the Buddha urges against those who propound the view that "there definitely are immaterial realms" the obscure argument that "if their word is true then it is certainly still possible that I might reappear [after death] among the gods of the immaterial realms who consist of perception (*devā arūpino saññāmayā*)."[555] In light of the difficulties interpreting this strange text as a whole, it is difficult to know what to make of this passage. Second, and also as we have already seen, in AN 5.17.166, the *Udāyin-sutta,* Udāyin idiotically suggests that it is "those devas . . . who are formless, perception-made (*arūpī saññāmayā*)"[556] that have *manomayakāya.*

This is slender evidence indeed on which to construct a whole doctrine of a putative special kind of body! Indeed, I would argue that the main common feature that runs through these three passages that speak of *saññāmaya* embodiments is that they are all placed in the mouths of mistaken interlocutors, and in fact, therefore, comprise a kind of straw man position.[557] In

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[554] As Pande notes (89). Guang Xing also notes this distinction very briefly (n. 5 p. 223), and cites Rhys Davids to assert that this threefold division between different types of *attā/ātman* was pre-Buddhist and apparently pan-Indic.

[555] Ñāṇamoli 516; see above n. 542.

[556] See n. 503.

[557] In a note, Rhys Davids suggests that "it is clear . . . that the opinion here [in DN 9] put forward [of three kinds of 'self'] is intended to represent, not any Buddhist theory, but a view commonly entertained in the world." He names section 58 of the text, but he must mean section 53 (the text has no section 58 in his enumeration): "For these, Citta, are merely names, expressions, turns of speech, designations in common use in the world. And of these a Tathāgata makes use indeed, but is not led astray by them;" 263. Whether we are to conclude from the fact that Buddhist texts portray such a position as current in the world means that such a position was in fact propounded is, as Rhys David's careful wording suggests, difficult to decide, and it is in any case immaterial for the current argument; it suffices that we can dissociate this doctrine from any Buddhist position.

the absence of further evidence, we cannot but consider the model in which *manomayo attapaṭilabho* is included in DN 9 as a doctrinal freak of some kind – either the intrusion into a Buddhist context of a non-Buddhist position for polemical reasons, or perhaps as the sole vestige of a model that was floated at some point in doctrinal history but ultimately met with little long-term acceptance or success. This makes it all the more impossible to follow Pande in his reading of DN 9. He envisages a situation in which "the conception of the '*arūpī saññāmaya Attā*' also became important",[558] and the introduction of it as a third member into the (for Pande) pre-existing twofold model of **oḷārikakāya* and *manomayakāya* was necessitated by this newfound popularity. It is difficult to see any grounds for imagining such a scenario, however, when we are dealing with a model that is virtually a *hapax* in the entire expanse of the canon.

2.3.3 Ordinary body vs. *manomayakāya* in the *Sāmaññaphala-sutta* ("snake slough") model

If Pande is wrong, then, to identify the model that includes *manomayo attapaṭilabho* and *saññāmayo* ~ in DN 9 with the "snake slough" model from DN 2 and other texts, it is important that we look closely at the "snake slough" model and see exactly what kind of body *is* contrasted with *manomayakāya* there. As with *manomayakāya,* we find a standard pericope on this topic, repeated across a number of texts. We can take as our example once more DN 2. Recall that the monk, having progressed through the four *jhānas,* enters onto a kind of path of insight whereby he attains progressively to various kinds of knowledge and also various powers, and that this process begins with an accurate understanding of the inadequacy of the given body. More precisely, the monk is said to know,

> "This my body is material (*rūpī*), made up from the four great elements (*cātummahābhūtiko*), born of mother and father (*mātāpettikasambhavo*), fed on rice and gruel (*odanakummāsūpacayo*), impermanent, liable to be injured and abraded, broken

[558] Pande 89.

> and destroyed (*aniccucchādanaparimaddanabhedanaviddhaṃsanadhammo*), and this is my consciousness which is bound to it and dependent on it."[559]

As we can see, this body is not characterised as *oḷāriko*; the nearest such term is *rūpin.* The mere statement that this body is *rūpin,* however, is not enough to distinguish it from *manomayakāya,* for, as we have already seen in the quotation of the relevant following passage from DN 2 above, that too is characterised as *rūpin.* What distinguishes the two bodies, rather, is the stuff from which they are made: the four elements, in the case of this ordinary, unsatisfactory given body, vs. mind (*manas*). It is also possible that an implicit distinction is posited in terms of sustenance, since we see here that this body is fed on staple cereals. In passages describing it as predicated of *devas* if not of the meditator, by contrast, the *manomayakāya* is sometimes understood to exist in a realm "beyond [that of] the deva-community that feed on solid food" and, in the case of beings in the intermediate time between *kalpas,* to feed on joy (*pītibhakka*).

As we will see in the analysis of Sarvâstivādin doctrines of embodiment below, this description is also significant because, unlike almost any of the other Pāli material we have treated so far, aspects of it were to echo through understandings of ordinary embodiment later in the tradition, where they were incorporated into (relatively unformalised) schemes of Buddha bodies.

For the moment, the main conclusions we can draw from the Pāli documents about *manomayakāya,* as it is thus contrasted with ordinary embodiment, from this, the most certainly old (see below) and widespread relation of *manomayakāya* to Buddhist orthodoxy and orthopraxis in the Pāli materials, are the following. (1) *Pace* Pande's readings of DN 9, the **oḷārikakāya,* etc., there is no articulated schema of multiple different *types* of body.

[559] Walshe 104: *ayaṃ kho me kāyo rūpī cātummahābhūtiko mātāpettikasambhavo odanakummāsūpacayo aniccucchādanaparimaddanabhedanaviddhaṃsanadhammo. idaṃ ca pana me viññāṇaṃ ettha sitaṃ ettha paṭibaddhanti.*

Manomayakāya is opposed only to the ordinary body, which does not even warrant a special name of any kind. (2) Neither the ordinary body nor *manomayakāya* is held to be a special property of a Buddha. *Manomayakāya* is, further, as we saw above, not a property of the attainment of the end of the path, but a stage on it. (3) The turn of focus in practice to the elaboration of the *manomayakāya* seems to be motivated by, or predicated upon, a realisation of the radical inadequacy of the given body. (4) The *manomayakāya*'s primary role in the development of the path is that it serves as the basis for the acquisition of superpowers, whose role in turn in the overall soteriological process is however somewhat obscure.

2.3.4 Questions of relative chronology in Pāli *manomayakāya* materials

Before we consider more broadly the conclusions we can draw from the materials on *manomayakāya* surveyed above, we need to consider briefly what can be known about the relative dating of these materials within the Pāli canon as a whole. Once more, I have relegated detailed consideration of the grounds for judgements about dating to the relevant Appendix (Appendix 1.3), and here only summarise very briefly the conclusions of that discussion. Readers interested in my reasons for making these judgements can consult the Appendix itself.

The evidence for the relative dates of these ideas is once more complex and incomplete, but to the extent that we can form judgements, it seems that two conclusions are relatively safe. First, the inclusion of *manomayakāya* in DN 2 as part of the "snake slough" model of reembodiment already demonstrates that the notion of *manomayakāya* itself, in at least some of its interpretations, is old. It is of course for this reason that I have included in the present chapter. Second, inasmuch as we have any purchase on the question of how the various senses of *manomayakāya* relate to one another chronologically, it is precisely the sense in which it features in DN 2 that we can be most confident is old. This means, however, that our strongest

evidence is that in its oldest form, the doctrine of *manomayakāya* is a stepping stone towards the liberated state, but not in and of itself an adequate embodiment of such a state. It also means that it is also not specially associated with Buddhas *per se*.

2.3.5 An interpretation of the "snake slough" model, and "touching with the body" as the surest kind of knowledge

The above survey has made it clear that the DN 2 (*Sāmaññaphala-sutta*) "snake slough" model of *manomayakāya* was certainly not the only idea of *manomayakāya* that was in circulation in the Pāli canonical period. Nonetheless, the "snake slough" model is still arguably the most important of all the notions of *manomayakāya* we have surveyed, for three reasons: first, the pericope giving that model, and the larger outline of a curriculum practice of which it is a part, is extremely widely attested;[560] second, this is the only context in which *manomayakāya* is discussed as a part of doctrines of central importance to the salvific path in early Buddhism, so that the "snake slough" model is arguably the most typically Buddhist of all these ideas; third, it is the version of *manomayakāya* doctrine that we have the strongest reason to think old. This means that the "snake slough" model was clearly of importance for early Buddhism, and for this reason, we should scrutinise it as closely as we can.

As we saw above, the elaboration of *manomayakāya* in the DN 2 model occupies a particular place in a gradated curriculum of achievements of practice. Specifically, we observed that immediately before it, the monk proceeds through the four *jhānas*,[561] and upon that basis comes to a clear knowledge of the inadequacy of the ordinary given physical body.[562] (Let us recall, at

[560] See the list of passages cited above p. 233.

[561] Walshe 102-104.

[562] Walshe 104.

this point, that as we saw above,[563] in the *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna-sutta* DN 22, the attainment of a full and concrete awareness of the inadequacy of the given physical body is also a stepping-stone to liberation, though in that case, much more directly.) He thereupon elaborates the *manomayakāya,* and immediately after elaborating that body, he directs himself to the various supernormal powers:[564]

> "He then enjoys different powers: being one, he becomes many – being many, he becomes one; he appears and disappears; he passes through fences, walls and mountains unhindered as if through air; he sinks into the ground and emerges from it as if it were water; he walks on the water without breaking the surface as if on land; he flies cross-legged through the sky like a bird with wings; he even touches and strokes with his hand the sun and moon, mighty and powerful as they are; and he travels in the body as far as the Brahmā world."[565]

In other words, the meditator transcends all physical limitations whatsoever.

The next step in the process, which once more immediately follows on the acquisition of these supernatural powers, is that the meditator attains the four superknowledges:[566] he can hear all sounds at whatever distance; he knows the minds of others; he knows [his own] previous existences; and he knows "the passing-away and arising of [all] beings".[567]

Immediately that the meditator has attained these superknowledges, he comes to a full realisation "as it really is" of each of the four noble truths, and is utterly liberated.

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[563] See p. 159.

[564] Note that the word *iddhi*(-*bala*) is not used in this text.

[565] Walshe 105.

[566] Note that the word *abhiññā* is not used of these knowledges.

[567] Walshe 105-107.

> "He knows, 'Birth is finished, the holy life has been led, done is what had to be done, there is nothing further here.'"[568]

Now, I suggest that, though the text never explicitly says so, there is a clear implication here that the sequence we have just rehearsed is a sequence of *necessary prerequisites* for the elaboration of each successive step on the path.[569] In other words, it is *only* on the basis of having attained the four *jhānas* that it is possible to come to a "concentrated, purified and cleansed" knowledge of the inadequacy of the given body; it is only on the basis of this thorough and clear-sighted disillusionment with the fleshly body that it is possible to elaborate the *manomayakāya*; it is only on the basis of the elaboration of the *manomayakāya* that it is possible to attain the superpowers; and so on. Let us explore the possible logic of such a concatenation of prerequisites and consequences.

First, then, the *jhānas* are specifically said to lead, at the fourth *jhāna,* to a highly refined and stable mental state, characterised by the "disappearance of former gladness and sadness", "beyond pleasure and pain, and purified by equanimity and mindfulness".[570] The meditator "sits suffusing *his body* with that mental purity and clarification so that no part of *his body* is untouched by it" (my emphases).[571] The implication seems to be that the following state of absolutely clear-sighted knowledge of the real nature of the given physical body is only possible in such a state, and it is easy to imagine why. On the one hand, only, surely, with the

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[568] Walshe 107-108.

[569] Of course, there were disputes in the tradition about this question, and specifically, of whether the attainment of the *jhānas* etc. was necessary for liberation, or whether it was not possible to be liberated by *jñāna* alone. On this question, see Gombrich's Chapter Four in *How Buddhism Began*, "Retracing an Ancient Debate", on the relevant texts. Gombrich argues persuasively that it is unlikely that the idea that liberation was possible by *jñāna* alone was current or orthodox in the early tradition, and I follow him on this point.

[570] Walshe 103.

[571] Walshe 103.

kind of supreme imperturbable equanimity characterising this state would it be possible to contemplate the truly woeful inadequacy of the given physical body, to which, nevertheless, "this . . . my consciousness . . . is bound . . . and [upon which it is] dependent."[572] On the other hand, the state described is also characterised by a "mindfulness", which would surely mean that the meditator not only *could* face the true inadequacy of the body, but *could not* fail to notice it.

Next, the meditator immediately elaborates "another body", which is perfect ("complete in all its limbs and faculties"). The implication, surely, is that it is somehow only on the basis of a thorough disillusionment with the given physical body, and the concomitant disidentification from that body, that it is possible to tear oneself away fully, which it would seem is necessary for the mind-made body to be elaborated.

Next, the meditator attains the supernatural powers.[573] The implication is surely that it is *in the manomayakāya* that a person enjoys those powers; in other words, that the *manomayakāya* is the medium, if you like, of the radical freedom from ordinary physical conditions (location, time, number, substantiality etc.) that accrues immediately upon its elaboration.

[572] Walshe 104.

[573] It seems to me that Kubota confounds the order in which the meditator arrives at these various attainments when he says that because the elaboration of the *manomayakāya* succeeds upon the four *dhyānas,* the *manomayakāya* is "a body created by force of supernatural power" (*ṛddhibala*? 神通力; Kubota indiscriminately uses 神通 for both *iddhi* and *abhiññā* only a couple of lines earlier); Kubota, "*Manasu* no torikkusutāsei", 22. If we strictly observe the sequence of the text, the meditator has not yet elaborated any *iddhi* or *abhiññā* by whose power he could supposedly create the *manomayakāya*. Kubota, 23, does cite the passage (see below p. 273) from the *Vimokṣamārga* in support of his reading, but it is anachronistic of Kubota to use that text to interpret this DN passage, and disregard the fact that perhaps half a millennium and a vast welter of Abhidhamma intervenes between the two texts.

Next, the meditator attains the superknowledges. The implication here, I think, is that the superknowledges are a direct result and fruit of the exercise of the supernatural powers. In other words, exercising the radical free reign on the entire sweep of cosmic time and space attained via the *manomayakāya,* the meditator proceeds to range throughout all dimensions of *saṃsāra,* and thereby attains an intimate and personal knowledge of its workings, its ramifications, and its exhaustive reach. The superknowledges read like a very handy summary of the most pertinent kinds of knowledge a meditator concerned with the questions of Buddhist religion would acquire through such cosmic journeying: the knowledge of minds, notably in terms of their aptitudes or obstacles to liberation;[574] the knowledge of every detail of the way the law of *karma* and the logic of suffering has worked itself out through all his own countless prior existences, and the way, similarly, that law and logic works itself out through all existences of all beings.[575]

Finally, the meditator comes to a clear and present knowledge of each of the four noble truths "as it really is", and is liberated. The implication, surely, is, first, that the knowledge of the four noble truths is the "moral of the story" the practitioner gleans from his personal and direct experience of the entire gamut of *saṃsāra* and its workings, up and down the entire cosmos, and as it reaches into every nook and cranny of the existence of every sentient beings, even into the private confines of their unspoken thoughts. This would certainly make perfectly good

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[574] "He knows the mind with hate to be with hate; he knows the mind without hate to be without hate. He knows the deluded mind to be deluded; he knows the undeluded mind to be undeluded. He knows the narrow mind to be narrow; he knows the broad mind to be broad. He knows the expanded mind to be expanded; he knows the unexpanded mind to be unexpanded. He knows the surpassed mind to be surpassed; he knows the unsurpassed mind to be unsurpassed. He knows the concentrated mind to be concentrated; he knows the unconcentrated mind to be unconcentrated. *He knows the liberated mind to be liberated; he knows the unliberated mind to be unliberated*" (Walshe 105-106; my emphasis).

[575] Walshe 106-107. I confess I am not entirely sure of the place of clairaudience in this schema (Walshe 105); perhaps it is the actual mechanism by which knowledge of minds is possible, that is to say, one "hears" the thoughts of others?

sense. If the cosmos is indeed, as Buddhism teaches, merely a vale of *saṃsāric* woe, and if *saṃsāra* works by the universal and ineluctable mechanisms Buddhism says it does, then a meditator who attained these superknowledges would see directly and everywhere nothing but that woe and its workings. Second, the implication of the sequential logic we have been following is further, I would argue, that it is *only upon the basis* of such a supernatural, "supercognisant", if you like, direct encounter with *saṃsāra* in all its fully sublime scale and horror that true liberation is possible. Nowhere in the picture laid out in this vision would there be any room for hiding from the truth, as there simply *is* nowhere it does not reach. All vain fondness for the world would be quenched, and no skerrick of inclination to engagement with it could remain.

If this reading is correct, it means that, on the DN 2 model of the path, *manomayakāya* is an absolutely necessary stepping-stone to liberation (but clearly *not,* in virtue of its nature as a mode of presence in the world, characteristic of the goal of final and complete disengagement from worldly being in all its dimensions).

I believe that this reading can be given further indirect support by the peculiar notion of "touching" something "with the body", as a very direct kind of knowledge of certain spiritual truths, that is found scattered in various corners of the canon. Though the following considerations require us to go a little further out on our speculative limb, this reading of *manomayakāya* conversely also allows us to make better sense of that notion of "touching with the body" than has been possible hitherto. In the context of our study of the doctrine of *amata,* above, we had occasion to mention the striking notion of "touching the deathless element with the body".[576] The idea of a particular *bodily* relation to an *amatadhātu* is, in the context of this

[576] See refs n. 368.

current study of doctrines of embodiment, particularly suggestive, but it is initially difficult to know what to make of it. Thanissaro Bhikkhu, in his note to AN 6.5.46,[577] refers us to AN 9.43 and 9.44, for a distinction is made between "touching a meditative dimension with the body and knowing it with discernment". Both of these texts merely mention the notion in passing, however, and Thanissaro's reading is frankly speculative.

It is possible, however, to trace this notion through a wider range of texts in the Pāli canon. Thus, in SN 12.68, "Kosambi", Nārada explains that though he has cognitively understood the notion that Nibbāna is the cessation of existence, he is "not an arahant, one whose taints are destroyed". He explains this proposition with a simile of a man walking along a desert road, parched, finding a well in which there is water but having no bucket or rope. The man might look in the well and know there is water, but "he would not be able to *make bodily contact with it* (*kāyena phusitvā*)".[578] The implication is clearly that mere cognitive understanding is not enough for arhatship, and further, that the conceit of "touching with the body" can serve as a figure for the kind of more direct experiential knowledge that is lacking in mere cognitive understanding, the deficiency of which still separates Nārada from arhatship.

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[577] http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/an/an06/an06.046.than.html, accessed November 18 2006.

[578] *tassa udakanti hi kho ñāṇaṃ assa, na ca kāyena phusitvā vihareyya;* Bodhi 611. This text is one of those studied by Louis de la Vallée Poussin, in an article of which Gombrich translates key portions as an Appendix to Chapter Four of *How Buddhism Began,* and Gombrich also considers it in his chapter. Gombrich hypothesises that it was written in direct response to the *Susīma-sutta* (in the current form of the latter; Gombrich also argues that the Chinese version of the *Susīma-sutta,* for which see T99.96b23-98a13, reveals an earlier stage in the history of this text, so that "one might almost describe" the current Pāli version "as a kind of forgery"); Gombrich 127-129. Another text which takes a peculiar position on the question of the value of mere cognitive understanding of the truths is AN 3.3.21, "On Persons", where there are said to be three persons, an odd text where there seems to be dispute as to whether "one who has testified to truth with body" (*kāyasakkhi*; according to Woodward's n. 1 p. 102, *aṭṭha vimokkhe kāyena phusitvā*; he refers to AN II, 89, i.e. AN 4.9.89). Various monks pronounce various opinions, and then the Buddha, who is asked to adjudicate, just says, more or less, "It's really difficult to say"; Woodward and Hare I, 102-103. See Gombrich, *How Buddhism Began,* 105-107.

A few pages later, in SN 12.70 "Susīma", a dialogue is staged between Susīma and "a number of bhikkhus" who claim to have "declared final knowledge in the presence of the Blessed One". Upon hearing this claim, Susīma grills them about their understanding. Significantly, he wants to know, in particular, if they have attained the supernatural powers and the *abhijñā* of clairaudience etc. He is uniformly told by these monks that they have not attained this kind of knowledge, but "are liberated by wisdom". His last question to the monks, to which he receives the same answers, is "Do you venerable ones dwell in those peaceful deliverances that transcend forms, the formless attainments, having touched *them with the body* (*te kāyena phusitvā viharathā*) ?"[579] Setting aside a number of considerations that embroil this text but are ancillary to our concerns here,[580] it suffices for our current purposes that Susīma's questions clearly assume a model whereon it is *usually understood* that the supernatural powers and superknowledges are necessary for liberation, and that this is spoken of in terms of "touching with the body".

The association of "touching with the body" with meditative attainments is not confined to this text. In AN 6.5.46, *Mahācunda-sutta,* the Buddha adjudicates between the "Dhamma-zealots and the musers" (! – i.e. *dhamma* and *jhāna* specialists), and says that the *jhāna* specialists must be respected because they "live with their whole being in tune with the deathless".[581] Similarly, at AN 8.8.72, "The Same", a sequence of accomplishments are laid out, and it is said of each that despite it, a practitioner would still not be perfect without the following accomplishments; high on the list of these perfections is that the person dwells with his body touching "those tranquil

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[579] Bodhi 615. This same formulation is repeated two pages later with regard to Susīma himself; Bodhi 617.

[580] See n. 578.

[581] *ye amataṃ dhātuṃ kāyena phusitvā viharanti,* Woodward and Hare III, 252-253; see also Gombrich 130-131. I will return immediately below to the link this quote provides between "touching with the body" and *amata*.

deliverances, which, going beyond form, are formless . . ."[582] In MN 70, the *Kīṭāgiri-sutta,* to "touch with the body and stay in these tranquil releases which are formless" is clearly posited as the highest of a set of gradated attainments.[583]

However, the phrase "to touch with the body" is not necessarily used only of knowledge that is explicitly related to meditative accomplishment. At SN 48.53, "A Trainee", "having contacted with the body" "the destination, the cumulation, the fruit, the final goal" is part of the distinction between a trainee and one who is beyond training.[584] Similarly, in a series of similar and related texts on a gradated typology of four kinds of "recluse" (*śramaṇera*) at AN 4.9.87, 4.9.88 and 4.9.89, the phrase is repeatedly predicated of the "white-lotus recluse", who is the highest kind of recluse except for the "recluse exquisite among recluses". In AN 4.9.89, for example, the white-lotus recluse is described as one who "abides experiencing with his own person [=touching with his body] the eight deliverances".[585]

In this light, it seems clear that to "touch X with the body" may be a rough analogy to figures of speech like e.g. English "know it in your bones", Chinese *ti* 體 etc., meaning "to know directly and certainly from personal experience", and further, that to know truths in this manner is understood to be characteristic of advanced practitioners, very often (if not implicitly perhaps always) advanced practitioners of meditation.

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[582] Woodward and Hare IV, 211-212.

[583] *santā vimokkhā . . . āruppā te kāyena phassitvā viharati* Ñāṇamoli 580, cited and discussed in Gombrich, *How Buddhism Began,* 99. This attainment makes of the person attaining it one "released on both sides", *ubhato-bhāga-vimutto.*

[584] Bodhi 1697.

[585] *aṭṭha ca vimokkhe kāyena phassitvā viharati,* Woodward and Hare II, 98-99. So also 97, 100.

Now, it seems to me that the clear and frequently attested links between this figure of speech and *jhāna,* the association with the attainment of the supernatural powers and superknowledges attested in the *Susīma-sutta,* and so on, suggest that it is valid to interpret this notion in light of the DN 2 model of the meditative path. If it is valid to ask, then, in light of the DN 2 model, "*With which body* does the practitioner touch (encounter, experience) these truths?", it seems that the only conceivable answer would be "With the *manomayakāya.*"

As I said above, the connection I am thus drawing between *manomayakāya,* as it appears in the DN 2 model, and the idea of "touching truth with the body" is admittedly speculative, in the sense that there is no text where it is overtly said that anyone touches truth with the *manomayakāya* specifically. And yet, if the reading of DN 2 as a sequence of prerequisites and consequences that I laid out above is valid, on the one hand, and *manomayakāya* is therefore the necessary bodily condition and prerequisite for the attainment of supernatural powers and superknowledges, and direct, personal, liberating experience of the four noble truths; and if, on the other hand, "experiencing/realising bodily/in the body" (to translate *kāyena phusati* a little more liberally) is regularly connected with *jhāna,* the supernatural powers, and the superknowledges, and is spoken of as the kind of knowledge characteristic of the most advanced practitioners; then it seems plausible to me that the notion of *kāyena phusati* refers to the same meditative reality as the latter stages of the path in which *manomayakāya* features. This means, first, that the DN 2 model gives us a good framework within which to interpret the otherwise somewhat opaque conceit (especially when so literally translated) of "touching the truth with the body", but second, that the presence of that conceit in the canon is indirect further support for a reading of DN 2 which understands the *manomayakāya* to be the necessary bodily precondition and medium of the final stages of the path there described.

Finally, before we move on to summarising these materials on the *manomayakāya* and placing them in the broader history of development of doctrines of Buddha bodies, I must ask my reader to make a mental note, for future reference, that this is not the last we will hear in this dissertation of embodiments as they feature in this DN 2 model.

First, the ordinary given physical body as it features in this model, that is, as the topic or object of the clear insight into the specific inadequacies of ordinary given embodiment, enjoys a strange afterlife as the most direct identifiable precedent for the actual Sarvâstivāda doctrine of the Buddha's physical, worldly body. I say here "actual" doctrine because, as I will have occasion to argue at length in Chapter 4.4 of this dissertation, previous scholarship has been mistaken in thinking to identify the Sarvâstivāda as the source of a stereotypical "two-body" model of the Buddha's embodiment, and, what is of more specific relevance here, to think that the *rūpakāya* is one of the two kinds of body that enter into that model. Setting aside here questions of relative chronology that we will explore there, which problematise the very notion that Sarvâstivāda could have been the *source* of anything significant in early Mahāyāna notions of the Buddha's embodiments, it turns out not to be the case that the canonical Sarvâstivāda Abhidharma predicated a *rūpakāya* of the Buddha at all. Rather, as we will see below (see esp. §4.4.4), the Sarvâstivāda Abhidharma of the **Mahāvibhāṣā* predicated of the Buddha, in opposition to the *dharmakāya,* a "body of birth" or "body born of father and mother", which seems, particularly in light of the latter term for it, to be directly traceable to the present DN 2 "snake slough" model of the ordinary given physical body and its inadequacies. I will examine this point in more detail below.

Second, as we will see in Chapter 4 of this dissertation,[586] the overall DN 2 model of the path of practice and realisation, of which such a pivotal part is this "snake slough" model of the rejection of the inadequate given body and the elaboration of *manomayakāya* in its stead, was summarised in other Pāli-canonical materials under a rubric of "aggregates" (*khandha/skandha*). This rubric eventually came to have five members, though it seems possible, on the basis of evidence in the *Subha-sutta* (DN 10) and the *Mahāparinibbāna-sutta* (DN 16), to see that it probably only grew gradually to that number, and had its beginnings in a briefer threefold rubric. In Chapter 4, I show that this rubric of "pure aggregates" comprises a kind of hidden thread that links a number of important conceptions in the history of ideas about the Buddha's embodiments. Not only does it have its origins as an epitome of the present DN 2 model of the path, which I have tried to show here has issues of embodiment at its heart and near its pinnacle; it also plays a key role in the characterisation of the relics of the Buddha in early Kharoṣṭhī reliquary inscriptions that enable us to see that relics were conceived of as veritable bodies of the Buddha, and in fact, that they may have been the earliest fully-fledged ideal special body of the Buddha that we can see in Buddhist history as a whole; and it went on to play a key role in conceptions of the Buddha's ideal embodiments in early Prajñāpāramitā literature, as exemplified by Lokakṣema's *Aṣṭasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā-sūtra* (see Ch. 4.3) and in Sarvâstivāda Abhidharma definitions of the *dharmakāya*. Detailed examination of these questions, also, will have to wait until the appropriate sections of this dissertation.

2.3.6 Discussion: the overall nature and significance of *manomayakāya* in Pāli Buddhism to the larger history of Buddhist doctrines of embodiment

It is now possible to broadly summarise and synthesise the above discussion, and draw the some further conclusions.

[586] See esp. §4.1.2.5, p. 529 ff.

First, it should be noted that very little in the materials we surveyed was held to be particular to the Buddha. The excessive focus on embodiments of the Buddha only in studies of Buddhist doctrines of the body, and particular of ideal embodiments, as led scholars to find only what they were looking for, and consider *manomayakāya* only insofar as it is a property of the Buddha himself. As we saw, however, *manomayakāya* is only predicated specially of the Buddha in two loci only: his SN 51.7.3.2 declaration to Ānanda that he has travelled in a *manomayakāya* to the Brahmā Heaven, and his appearance to Anuruddha in a *manomayakāya* in ThaG 901 and AN 8.3.30. Aside from this, the centre of gravity of the concept is decidedly elsewhere, whether it be posited as a phase of practice in the path of any Arhat, a form of embodiment adopted by *devas* in remote heavens or cosmological ages, or a post-mortem destiny promised to diligent monks and generous laypersons. In light of this fact, it seems to me that regarding *manomayakāya* as primarily, or even significantly, an antecedent to later doctrines of *buddhakāya* is to miss the point, and that rather, it is primarily posited in these early texts as a form of ideal embodiment broadly available to numerous classes of being, not all of them realised or necessarily even Buddhist; and one by the same token rather ambivalent, in that it can function as an object of false identification as a "self" (Poṭṭhapāda) as much as a stepping-stone to the soteriological goal (the "snake slough" model).

Second, it seems important to note that there is no indication in any of the materials that we examined about *manomayakāya* that it is ever elaborated for the benefit of any being other than the being who elaborates it. That is to say, apart from the single anomalous instance[587] of the Anuruddha verse found at ThaG 901/AN 8.3.30, there is never any occasion on which it is said to

[587] See §1.3.7 for a discussion of general methodological problems associated with such instances, and other examples of this methodological problem in this dissertation.

be elaborated as a teaching device, and indeed, I know of *no* discourse about bodies to this effect in the early Pāli materials.

Third, it also seems significant given that the apparently earliest and certainly most typical soteriological discussion of *manomayakāya,* that found in the "snake slough" model, proceeds in the context of a doctrine of the *iddhipāda* (Skt. *ṛddhipāda*), or bases of supernatural power. If this material is indeed as early as scholarly consensus holds it to be,[588] then it is at least possible to say certainly that the possibility of an alternative supernatural form of embodiment is entertained right from the very inception of the tradition, or as close to the inception as our analytical tools allow us to come. This fact makes it impossible to sustain the more "Protestant" kind of modern rationalist apologetic with regard to body doctrine, which might easily have pretended, in the light of the narrative put forward by scholarship on the question of bodies to date, that the whole idea of seeking an alternative embodiment was a Mahāyāna betrayal of the norms of an "authentic", "primitive" or "original" Buddhism.

Fourth, therefore, and despite some of the considerations just urged, it remains nonetheless true that if *manomayakāya* is (as seems to be the case) the best candidate for a supernatural alternative form of embodiment to be found in the Pāli canonical materials, then it is only a very remote and slender precedent indeed for later notions of *buddhakāya* in particular and various ideal embodiments in general: as we have seen, it is not particular to the Buddha; nor is it (a related feature of the doctrine) absolutely "ideal", since it is generally characteristic of an elevated stage of realisation but not the ultimate soteriological goal; nor is it part of any systematic typology of bodies. Against this background, therefore, it seems that later concepts of *buddhakāya* are still quite a remarkable and fresh development, and perhaps a primary

[588] For example, if, as Pande suggests, it is really earlier than the five *skandhas,* one of the jewels in the crown of rationalist apology!

benchmark of the very significant differences that separate Mahāyāna, in particular, from its Mainstream predecessors.

Note that in arguing that *manomayakāya* as it actually appears in the Pāli materials does not constitute much of a real antecedent to later doctrines of *buddhakāya,* I am speaking from a perspective that regards the *manomayakāya* in the Pāli canon on its own terms, as it actually features in those texts. This does not, of course, by any means, obviate the fact that later traditions and texts subsumed elements of the doctrine about the *manomayakāya* into doctrines of the *nairmāṇikakāya* in particular, in a typical attempt to ground that more latterly developed notion in foundational scripture. In this regard only, Guang Xing is right to point out as significant the fact that later texts like the *Yogācārabhūmi-śāstra* and the *Foxing lun* place the *nairmāṇikakāya* among the super-knowledges (*abhijñā*);[589] clearly, in so doing, these later texts and their authors were reaching back to the "snake slough" model of *manomayakāya* in an attempt to lend an air of hoary antiquity and authenticity to the *nairmāṇikakāya.* However, to recognise that the later texts are deliberately setting up the appearance of such affinities does not mean that we have to capitulate to the claims of the later sources, and agree that the *manomayakāya is in fact* a "precedent" for the *nairmāṇikakāya.* Indeed, if we do so, we thereby blind ourselves to the very significant differences between the two concepts. In fact, much of the interest in intellectual and doctrinal history lies precisely in tracing and laying bare the very processes of appropriation and modulation by which older concepts are bent to new uses and fit into the alien contours of later systems, and in the long leap from *manomayakāya* to *nairmāṇikakāya,* we have one great instance of just such a process.

[589] See Guang 138. Guang, however, calls *abhijñā* "supernatural powers", and seems to thereby distinguish insufficiently between *abhijñā* and *ṛddhipāda.*

2.3.7 A sketch of some later developments in *manomayakāya* doctrine

Beyond the Pāli-canonical materials, the concept of manomayakāya has a chequered "post-history" in various cameo roles in later and Mahāyāna texts, and on the whole, it seems that such passages, too, support the interpretation that the early *manomayakāya* is not such a close cousin of *nairmāṇikakāya,* attempts of architects of *nairmāṇikakāya* doctrine to forge such a link notwithstanding. Space precludes us from examining this post-history in detail here, and I will consider just a handful of salient examples.

A very important development is seen in the *Mahāvastu,* where part of the docetistic doctrine is that the Conqueror (*jina*) is born without causing his mother pain, and that this is because

> "Tathāgatas are born with a physical form that is made of mind (*manomayena rūpena*), and that is why the mother's body is not rent and why no pain ensues."[590]

Though it is not quite the case that the term *manomayakāya* is being used for a special body of the Buddha (we have *rūpa* instead to indicate the body), this development certainly shows that in this line of Buddhist thought, the old concept of *manomayakāya* was appropriated to make sense of the new docetistic doctrine. Note that this observation differs from saying that *manomayakāya,* interpreted in terms of its original Pāli context, does in that original context form a genuine conceptual forerunner or parallel to the later doctrines. As I argued above, in earlier contexts, there is very little to parallel the doctrine found here. In fact, this new *Mahāvastu* doctrine does a certain amount of violence to the old *nikāya* understanding of *manomayakāya* as we observed it above, because it begins to loosen the relatively consistent association between *manomayakāya* and the *rūpadhātu* that ran throughout many of those old usages. The doctrine we see here, rather, picks up on a rare and minor thread of the old

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[590] *manomayena rūpeṇa prādurbhonti tathāgatā/ evaṃ na bhidyate pārśvaṃ vedanā ca na jāyate//*, Jones I, 174;repeated at II, 20.

understanding seen e.g. in the story of Kakudha's apparition to Moggallāna[591] or the Buddha's teaching apparition to Anuruddha,[592] whereby it was possible even in those older passages for beings from higher realms to temporarily manifest in the ordinary world in a *manomayakāya.* What is new here, however, is the idea that such a manifestation, if undertaken by the Buddha, could be relatively permanent, i.e. could last for the span of an entire apparent lifetime to the eyes of ordinary worldlings.

It is worthwhile noting that this understanding of the Buddha's body as *manomaya* is not consistently maintained throughout the *Mahāvastu.* In one particularly delightful passage,[593] which is in direct contradiction to the passages just examined, we find that Māra has such a body, *but the Buddha does not*; Māra speaks rather of the Buddha's body as an *audārikâtman* "gross body" ,[594] and this body is further qualified as "born of a mother and father".[595] This "gross body" is contrasted with Māra's own wonderful *manomayakāya,* and Māra is furious that one with such a base embodiment should be able to beat him! This passage is all the more remarkable in that it appears in the text usually considered the flagship of Mahāsāṃghika, who are moreover supposed to be the docetists *par excellence* in the history of body doctrine, and yet we find ourselves told that the Buddha's body is "gross"![596] We will return to this latter point in our discussion of *Mahāvastu* in the context of Mahāsāṃghika doctrines later in this dissertation.

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591 See p. 236.

592 See p. 238.

593 *Mahāvastu* II.277.18 (see Edgerton s.v. *audārikâtman*), Jones II, 253, 260-261.

594 Corresponding to Pāli *oḷārika~,* studied above.

595 *Mātāpitṛsaṃbhavo:* note the partial echo of description given of the (unsatisfactory) given physical body immediately preceding the DN 2 "snake slough" pericope (see n. 559).

596 Are we perhaps to take it that Māra has not been kept informed of progress in the doxographical status ascribed to the Mahāsāṃghikas? (Or is the Buddha's docetistic illusion powerful enough to take

The notion of *manomaya* features in other passages as well, where the old association of *manomaya* and the *rūpadhātu* is more consistently maintained. When the text describes five kinds of eye possessed by a Buddha: the fleshly eye, the *deva* eye, the eye of wisdom, the eye of Dharma, and the Buddha eye. The second of these, the *deva* eye, is the same as that of a whole pantheon of pan-Indic *devas,* "only superior, larger and more expansive"; "this eye is concerned with forms made of mind" (*tat pravṛttaṃ manomayeṣu rūpeṣu*);[597] in other words, we here encounter once more the notion that *manomaya* is proper to the *rūpadhātu,* and this eye is the eye with which one sees the *rūpa* of that *dhātu*. In another passage, as we mentioned above, the text repeats the account of cosmogony we have already seen in DN, including the understanding that beings at the beginning of the *kalpa* are *manomaya*.[598] Here, too, the association with *rūpadhātu* remains. When the *devas* flock to watch over the Bodhisattva in his mother's womb, they are described as "immortals who come with the pace of the mind-made" (*manomayavikramagatehi*); Jones translates more liberally as "whose coming is as swift as thought".[599] Here we might note that the association with the *rūpadhātu* stands, indirectly, through the association with the *devas,* and we might also recall that the gift of movement throughout the cosmos at will is among the superpowers following on the elaboration of the *manomayakāya* in the model of DN 2.

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even Māra in? Perhaps this doctrine is placed in the mouth of Māra as a particularly horrendous blasphemy?)

[597] Jones I, 126.

[598] Jones I, 285, repeated at 286, 289 etc.: *te bhavanti svayaṃprabhāḥ antarīkṣacarā manomayā prītibhakṣāḥ sukhasthāyino yenakāmaṃgatāḥ dharmatā khalu.*

[599] Jones I, 165, repeated at II, 10.

Despite the novel doctrine, found in two passages only, that the Buddha's mother is delivered of him painlessly because he is born in a *rūpaṃ manomāyaṃ,* then, the bulk of the references to *manomaya* and *manomayakāya* in the *Mahāvastu* are relatively conservative.

The **Vimokṣamārga* 解脫道論[600] clearly groups the *manomayakāya* and what I am here calling the supernatural powers together as the first of five *shentong* (神通 *ṛddhi/abhijñā*). The other four of these superpowers, moreover, are what I am referring to here as the four "superknowledges", and the whole group is clearly attained by someone who "dwells in the four *dhyānas*". The echoes of the DN 2 model are clear, but in grouping *manomayakāya* as one of these powers, rather than as a ground or necessary condition for the attainment of the other powers, the text arguably evidences a doctrinal innovation.

This first of the five *shentong* is called "the power of the body" (身通, **kāyarddhi*?), which is glossed as meaning "transformation" (身通者變義; **pariṇāma*?), and divided into three types:

> (1) 受持變, which I am unsure how to translate, is the power of multiplying oneself at will and of roaming as far even as the Brahma heaven;
>
> (2) 作變, "transformation in the sense of creation", i.e. the power to manifest out of thin air, is glossed as the power of discarding one's own proper form and appearing as a child, a dragon, the Brahma king, etc.;

[600] Attributed to Upatiṣya (Upatissa, c. 150-250 C.E.), but only translated into Chinese in 515 by Saṃghavarman.

(3) 意所作變, **manomayapariṇāma*?, "the power to transform making [bodies] of mind", is the power to create another body from this body, and to create all manner of bodies at will complete with all their organs and faculties.[601]

A little later, in another passage, the text explains that the mechanism of this 意所作變 is that the meditator first regards this body "like an empty bottle",[602] and it is then possible to create [other bodies] at whim and then to sustain them; the text further associates this power with the power to travel as far as the Brahma world, states once more that the new body is replete with all its organs and faculties, and, in a familiar formula, that its actions in the Brahma world match exactly to the actions of the ordinary body in this world: "When he walks back and forth here, the magical person manifested there walks back and forth; when he sits or stands here, it sits or stands there; when he emits smoke or flame, or asks and answers questions, in this world here, so it too emits smoke or flames, asks and answers questions, in that world there; all these transformations are manifested by his supernatural powers".[603]

These passages clearly show that in this later text, at least, *manomayakāya* was incorporated within the rubric of the supernatural powers. If my reading of the *Sāmaññaphala-sutta* (DN 2) model above on its own terms, based upon the sequence in which ideas are presented there, was correct, then this is a clear change in the doctrine of *manomayakāya,* and may represent an

[601] T1648.441a26-b08.

[602] 瓶, also conceivably "jar", "pot" etc., sometimes used for *ghaṭa* e.g. in epistemological contexts.

[603] T1648.442c22-443a04, cited by Kubota, "*Manasu* no torikkusutāsei", 22-23.

attempt by Upatissa or his sources to rationalise the *manomayakāya* in terms of a rubric of *ṛddhi, abhijñā* etc. that was developed later than the *Sāmaññaphala-sutta* model itself.[604]

Kubota Chikara has found a number of passages relating to *manomayakāya* in Abhidharma (exclusively Sarvâstivāda) literature, and I will restrict myself here to the passages he brings to our attention. As Kubota points out,[605] the discussion of *manomayakāya* in this literature centres around the problem of the "intermediary existence" (*antarabhava*) of beings between rebirths, which, as we saw above, features almost not at all in the Pāli usages of the term. At the same time, a minor strand also retains in these texts the memory of the association between *manomayakāya* and non-Buddhist, heterodox doctrines of *ātman*.

Thus, the **Mahāvibhāṣā* informs us that there are four names for the *antarabhava*: *antarabhava, gandharva, saṃbhavaiṣin,* and *manomaya*.[606] With regard to the last, it explains further that *antarabhava* is called *manomaya,* "born of mind",[607] because there are various ways that beings are born, some from mind, some from *karma,* some from *vipāka* ("fruition" of *karmic* acts), and some from desire. It then states, most importantly for our purposes, that *manomaya* refers to people at the beginning of a *kalpa,*[608] [beings in] the *antarabhava,* [beings in] the *rūpa*- and

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[604] Recall that the terms *iddhi* and *abhiññā* do not actually appear in DN 2; see n. 564, 566. As I have argued above, these differences between Upatissa's model and that found in DN 2 mean that it is anachronistic for Kubota to use the former to interpret the latter; see n. 573.

[605] "*Manasu* no torikkusutāsei", 28.

[606] 如是中有有多種名。或名中有。或名[1]揵達縛。或名求有。或名意成, T1545.363a01-02; Kubota, "*Manasu* not torikkusutāsei", 26. Kubota says that these are four *types* of *antarābhava.*

[607] Kubota rightly points out the difference in nuance between this construction of the term and the "made of mind" more usual in the Pāli usages of the term; "*Manasu* no torikkusutāsei", 26.

[608] Recall that this matches category (7) in our list of Pāli canonical usages above. Note also that the association made here between *antarābhava* and people at the beginning of the *kalpa* seems to bear out Kubota's observation, for which see n. 524, that the age between *kalpas* is like a cosmic equivalent to the *antarābhava.*

arūpya-dhātu,[609] and bodies of magical transformation; it further states that though these are the places where beings are exclusively *manomaya,* there are beings who are *manomaya* in all destinies, including the hells, birds, *pretas,* the six *kāmadhātu* heavens, and among people, and that the term *manomaya* derives from the fact that these beings "ride upon *manas* when they move" (less literally, that *manas* is their vehicle).[610] From this it is clear that though the focus was on *antarabhava,* which was the original occasion whereby *manomayakāya* came under discussion, other dimensions of its use were still remembered (better than they are in modern secondary scholarship, indeed!). In another passage, the focus is likewise on *antarabhava,* when the text cites scripture stating that sentient beings exist in a *manomaya* form (意成有情, **manomayasattva*?) between rebirths, again in order to prove that the *antarabhava* indeed exists.[611] In another passage soon after, one of the parties to a debate again cites scripture to this effect, and claims that this **manomayasattva* is found in the *ārūpyadhātu*.[612] In response to

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[609] This strikes me as odd; recall that in all of the Pāli discussions, including the idea that the *manomayakāya* is the form in which the meditator journeys to the *brahmaloka, manomayakāya* seems to be consistently confined to the *rūpadhātu*. Indeed, as we saw, AN 5.17.166 seems to show how much of an idiot Udāyin is *precisely* by having him claim that a "formless" *deva* could have a mind-made body! Perhaps the point of this text was lost on the later tradition, which instead took it as warrant for the doctrine that *manomayakāya does* characterise the *ārūpyadhātu*? Kubota, however, seems unsurprised to see this doctrine here; 26. See, however, n. 609 below for evidence that this doctrine was known to the Vaibhāṣikas.

[610] 問何故中有復名意成。答從意生故。謂諸有情或從意生。或從業生。或從異熟生。或從婬欲生從意生者。謂劫初人及諸中有。色無色界并變化身。從業生者。謂諸地獄。如契經說。地獄有情業所繫縛不能免離。由業而生不由意樂。從異熟生者。謂諸飛鳥及鬼神等。由彼異熟勢輕健故能飛行空。或壁障無礙。從婬欲生者。謂六欲天及諸人等。諸中有身從意生故。乘意行故名爲意成; T1545.363a17-27, cited in Kubota, "*Manasu* no torikkusutāsei", 26.

[611] 又經說有中般涅槃。中有若無。此依何立。餘經復說。此身已壞餘身未生意成有情依止於愛而施設取。世尊既說此身已壞餘身未生意成有情依愛立取。故知中有決定非無。若無中有意成有情名何所表, T1545.357a01-06; Kubota, "*Manasu* no torikkusutāsei", 27.

[612] 分別論者通第三經言。意成有情即是無色界。謂有出家犢子梵志。已離欲染得天眼通。彼有同學已離色染先此命終生無色界。犢子梵志以天眼通。欲色界中遍觀不見。便作是念彼斷滅耶爲決自疑來至佛所。以所疑事而白佛言。喬答摩尊。願爲解脫。此身已壞餘身未生。意成有情依止何法而施設取。世尊告曰。梵志當知。此身已壞餘身未生。意成有情依止於愛而施設取。佛意告言。汝之同學從此命終。生無色界依愛立取非謂斷滅, T1545.57c19-29. The assertion that beings are *manomaya* in the *ārūpyadhātu* seems to fly in the face of all we have observed in the Pāli canon; see n. 609 above. In a

this, the interlocutor objects, and again lists the same range of meanings or applications for *manomaya* as the earlier passage just examined above.[613]

Elsewhere, *manomayakāya* also comes to issue in a unrelated sense, that is, in the question of "where" one engages in the *nirodhasamādhi,* and the related old question of the form in which accomplished meditators may be reborn. The text cites the AN 5.17.166 dispute between Udāyin and Śāriputra that we cited above, showing that accomplished meditator monks can be born in among *devas* with a *manomayakāya.* [614]

In a further different vein, the **Mahāvibhāṣā* also makes a distinction between two kinds of words, which, it seems, are basically those that have true references (or are adequate to the real state of affairs) and those that are not: the examples listed of first kind are standard Buddhist

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note to the discussion of the dispute between Udāyin and Śāriputra in connection with *nirodhasamāpatti* in AKBh to 2.44d, la Vallée Poussin cites the Japanese editor of the AKBh identifying those who hold the opinion that the *manomayakāya* can also pertain to the *ārūpyadhātu* as Sautrāntikas; VP AKBh II, 209 n. 3. Kubota suggests convincingly, 48, that the scriptural warrant at issue here is likely to be something like this passage from the *Saṃyuktâgama*: 婆蹉白佛。眾生於此命終。乘意生身往生餘處。云何有餘。佛告婆蹉。眾生於此處命終。乘意生身生於餘處。當於爾時。因愛故取。因愛而住。故說有餘, T99.244b02-05. For translation and brief discussion of this passage, see above n. 543.

613 經說意成表多種義。成表中有。或表化身。或表劫初人。或表上二界。何緣知此表, T1545.358a01-03.

614 For this AN text, see p. 234 above. **Vibhāṣā* here reads: 如契經說。尊者舍利子告苾芻眾言。若苾芻戒定慧具足者。能數數入出滅受想定。彼於現法及將死時。若不能辨如來聖旨。命終超段食天處。生在意成身天中。於彼復能數數入出滅想受定。斯有是處應如實知。時具壽鄔陀夷 (Udāyin)。在彼會坐。語尊者舍利子言。彼苾芻生意成身天。能數入出滅想受定無有是處第二第三亦如是說. At this point, the text enters into a discussion of the rights and wrongs of the dispute and the possible reasons Udāyin held the position he did, but it is clear that in this case, at least, the Vaibhāṣikas were clear that mastery of the *nirodhasamāpatti* entailed rebirth in a *manomayakāya* in the *rūpadhātu,* not the *ārūpyadhātu:* 問何故具壽鄔陀夷再三違逆尊者舍利子。答彼之所疑非無處所。彼作是念。得此定者必已離無所有處染。命終應生非想非非想處。於彼必無起此定理。又彼不了舍利子意。是故現前再三違逆 etc., T1545.778c04-16. Kubota fails to notice this distinction, and discusses the passage in the same breath as passages that do claim that *manomayakāya* appertains to the *ārūpyadhātu* also; this is probably linked to the fact that he fails to notice the doctrine that rebirth among *devas* with form in *manomayakāya* is a separate application of the idea of *manomayakāya* in the Pāli materials, where he subsumes it under the (perhaps somewhat anachronistic) head of *antarābhava*; see n. 484 above.

truths, and they are said to increase if a Buddha appears in the world; the examples of the second kind are non-Buddhist heresies like *ātman,* and they are said to increase if there is no Buddha in the world.[615] Here, **manomaya* (or possibly **manoja,* 意生) is given as an example of the second type, and it thus seems the text has in mind the kind of ideas about *manomaya* we saw above in the *Poṭṭhapāda-sutta* or the *Brahmajāla-sutta* doctrines of the nihilists, that is, a notion that is contrary to Buddhist truths.

Abhidharmakośa and *–bhāṣya* has little to add to this **Mahāvibhāṣā* material, and Vasubandhu's interest in the concept is noticeably less than that of the Vaibhāṣikas. The text lists five (not four) kinds of *antarabhava,* among which *manomaya* is still included, and says of the category of *manomaya* merely that it is so called because it is produced only by *manas*, without appropriating any exterior element like semen, blood, flowers etc.[616] Elsewhere, the text repeats the tradition that beings at the beginning of the *kalpa* are *manomaya*.[617] Like the Saṃmitīyas below, Vasubandhu, also quotes the dispute between the Vaibhāṣikas and their interlocutors about the disagreement between Udāyin and Śāriputra, and clearly states that in his opinion, the Buddha makes it clear that the *manomayakāya* so attained belongs to the *rūpadhātu*.[618] In general, then, AKBh shows very little interest in the concept of *manomayakāya* at all.

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[615] 復次名有二種。一有相名。二無相名。有相名者。如無常苦空無我等。無相名者。如我人有情意生等。若佛出世則有相名多無相名少。若不出世則無相名多有相名少, T1545.73c05-09; Kubota, "*Manasu* no torikkusutāsei", 27.

[616] VP II, 122.

[617] VP II, 204.

[618] See above, n. 612.

Thus, though the range of doctrines linked to *manomayakāya* surviving from the Pāli period is broader than Kubota seems willing to recognise,[619] it is significant that, as Kubota observes,[620] there is almost nothing in these Sarvâstivāda materials that refers to what was arguably the central role of *manomayakāya* in the Pāli materials, that is, its place in the *Sāmaññaphala* model of the meditative path; indeed, it is only in passing mention of "transformational bodies" as one of the senses in which *manomayakāya* is used that we see any recollection of this sense of *manomayakāya* at all.

Kubota also points out the fact that some passages indicate that in its role as the vehicle of "intermediary existence", *manomayakāya* seems to have played a role in the reportedly *pudgalavāda* theories of the Saṃmitīya Vātsīputrīya school.[621] Kubota cites in support of this observation the following passages from the 三彌底部論 (**Saṃmitīyavāda-śāstra*?) T1649.

> "Further, the *antarabhava* does indeed exists, just as it says in the *Discourse Expounded by the Buddha to Vaccha*:
>
> > 'At that time the Buddha said to Vaccha, "When [a person] abandons the body here (此, *iha*) but has not yet been born in that place [=world, 彼處], at that time, because of the conjunction of the body born of mind (*manomayakāya*) and attachment (意生身愛取合), I declare that [a person in that state is nonetheless] called a 'being' (*sattva*)."'[622]
>
> "On the basis of this *Discourse Expounded by the Buddha to Vaccha,* we thus see that the *antarabhava* does indeed exist."[623]

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[619] Inasmuch as the lists of meanings cited twice, for which see n. 610, 613, include also beings at the beginning of the *kalpa,* and Kubota underplays or misconstrues the role of *manomayakāya* in the post-mortem destiny of accomplished meditators, which is still recognised by the text.

[620] Kubota, "*Manasu* no torikkusutāsei", 28.

[621] Kubota, "*Manasu* no torikkusutāsei", 28.

[622] See n. 543, 612 above for the likely source of this quotation.

[623] 復次有中間有。如佛說跋蹉耶那修多羅。爾時佛語跋蹉耶那。捨此身未生彼處。是時意生身愛取合故。我說名爲眾生。我等見佛說跋蹉耶那修多羅。是故有中間有, T1649.470b21-24.

. . . .

> "Further, [with regard to] the claim made earlier [that it can be shown there must be an *antarabhava*] on the basis of the *Discourse Expounded by the Buddha to Vaccha*: [This argument can be refuted] by [interpreting it as] speaking in terms of the three *dhātu*.[624] What is meant by 'abandons the body here'? It means that one abandons [the body in] the realm of desire (*kāmadhātu*). What is meant by 'has not yet been born there (彼) [= in that world]? It means that one has not yet been born into the realm of form (*rūpadhātu*). What is meant by 'at that time'? It means *when one is born into the realm of form.* What is meant by 'of the conjunction of the body born of mind (*manomayakāya*) and attachment'? It means a grasping that is attached to the 'savour' of *dhyāna* (著禪味愛相合). Thus, this exposition by the Buddha does not prove that the *antarabhava* exists."[625]

In other words, as with the *Saṃyuktâgama* version of the *Vaccha-sūtra,* which they seem to cite (or a text very much like it), it seems that the interlocutors here, at least, whoever they may be intended to represent, verge on seeing *manomayakāya* as a vehicle of transmigration. It is difficult to see much distinction between this view

Manomayakāya further appears in the *Śrīmāladevī-sūtra,* where rebirth in a *manomayakāya* is associated with the inability of the Arhats, Śrāvakas and Pratyekabuddhas to overcome the most deep-rooted of defilements, *avidyāvāsabhūmi* (Wayman's "nescience entrenchment"), and thus with the key Mahāyāna distinction between the excellence of these less exemplars and that of the Buddha.[626] Thus, adherents of the three lesser vehicles are said to have "a remainder of rebirth" 有餘生 due to fear;[627] their passing away (death) and rebirth, which

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[624] Reading 說三界故 as equivalent to a Skt. instrumental.

[625] 復次如前所說。跋蹉耶那修多羅故。說三界故。佛已說三界。捨此身有何義。曰捨欲界。未生彼有何義。曰未生色界。是時有何義。曰生色界。意生身。愛取合有何義。曰著禪味愛相合。是佛所說。不明中間有, T1649.471a12-18.

[626] Kubota Chikara has studied the place of this concept of *manomayakāya* in the *Śrīmālādevī* and RGV in his "Shō to iu yogore: Ishōshin to fukashigi-hen'eki-shōji 生という汚れ:意生身と不可思議変易生死", *Indogaku bukkyōgaku kenkyū* 47, 1 (1998), 122-127. He uses material from AKBh 3.40 to make the suggestion that this conception of *manomayakāya* may be rooted in Sarvâstivāda doctrine.

[627] See Wayman and Wayman 80, T353.219c02.

realises this remainder, is of a kind called "inconceivable transformation" (不思議變易死 "inconceivable transference", Wayman), and entails the acquisition of a *manomayakāya*;[628] and it is possible that the text holds that there are three *different* kinds of *manomayakāya* thus conditioned by *avidyāvāsabhūmi,* corresponding respectively to each of the three kinds of being.[629]

Manomayakāya also features in the maverick doctrines of the *Laṇkāvatāra-sūtra*.[630] In one passage, the text asserts that bodhisattvas attain such a body at the eighth stage of the path, at the moment of *āśrayaparāvṛtti,* when they transcend *citta, manas, manovijñāna,* the *pañcadharma,* the *trisvabhāva* etc., the *nairātmyadvaya* etc. The acquisition of this body is explicitly associated, as in the seminal DN 2 "snake slough" model, with the acquisition of supernatural powers, and rebirth into the most exalted destinies in the realm of *saṃsāra*.[631]

In another extended passage, the text teaches three different *kinds* of *manomayakāya* (*kāyo manamāyaḥ*), viz.:[632]

> (1) a *manomayakāya* obtained in through the well-being of *samādhi* (*samādhisukhasamāpattimanomayo*): this is proper to the third, fourth and fifth stages of

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[628] Wayman and Wayman 82, 219c22-23.

[629] Wayman and Wayman 85-86, 220a15-24; part of this passage is cited in RGV, Johnston 33-34, Takasaki 217, and we thus have the Sanskrit also. Kubota Chikara has made a study of the problem posed by this kind of rebirth in his article entitled "*Shōman gyō* ni okeru dairiki bosatsu no seiritsu".

[630] I am grateful to Elon Goldstein for reminding me of the existence of these passages at a pertinent point in my research. We will revisit some of these passages in more detail below, in §5.2.6.

[631] Nanjio 81, Suzuki 71-72. A similar doctrine is mentioned more in passing at Nanjio 125-126, Suzuki 108.

[632] Nanjio 136, Suzuki 118.

the path, and is characterised by the quietude of mind and the recognition of the non-existence of the external world and its actual status as a manifestation of his own mind;[633] at this stage the bodhisattva "is said to have" the *manomayakāya* (*manomayaḥ kāyo ity ucyate*).[634]

(2) a *manomayakāya* obtained by awakening to the true nature of things (*dharmasvabhāvâvabodhimanomayo*): this is, once more, the *manomayakāya* obtained at the eighth stage of the path, as above, associated with *āśrayaparāvṛtti,* the *māyôpamāsamādhi,* and the acquisition of superpowers.[635]

(3) a *manomayakāya* "assumed [by a Bodhisattva according to] the class of beings [to be saved] and which perfects and achieves [without a thought of its own achievement" (Suzuki; *nikāyasahajasaṃskārakriyāmanomaya*). This seems, from its description, to be a teaching body, and thus perhaps related loosely to the *narimāṇikakāya,* but the description given in the text is somewhat obscure.[636]

Finally, in a very striking and obscure passage, LAS predicates a *manomayadharmakāya,* or "Dharma body made of mind", of the Tathāgata. The context is a discussion between Mahāmati and the Tathāgata about the existential status of the Tathāgata, where the Tathāgata is concerned to correct a certain misapprehension that Mahāmati has that because he is spoken of as "not subject to birth or destruction" etc., perhaps he does not exist. The Buddha explains

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[633] *svacittadṛśyaviṣayābhāvâbhāva.*

[634] Nanjio 136, Suzuki 118-119.

[635] Nanjio 137, Suzuki 119.

[636] Nanjio 137, Suzuki 119.

that the same thing can be referred to by different names or descriptions, and that the same is true of him: he is various known by a remarkable slew of names, including the Tathāgata, the Self-Existent One, Leader, "Remover" (*vinayaka*), "Guide" (*pariṇāyaka*), Buddha, Ṛṣi, "Bull-king", Brahma, Viṣṇu, Īśvara(!), "original source" (*pradhāna*!), Kapila, "the limit of existence (*bhūtânta*), Soma (the moon), the Sun, Rāma, Vyāsa, Indra, Varuṇa, emptiness, suchness, truth, reality, *bhūtakoṭi,* and so on. The Tathāgata prefaces this explanation by saying that it is indeed true (in one manner of speaking, we presume) that he is "unborn" (*anutpāda*), but that "the epithets (appellations) of the Tathāgata in his *manomayadharmakāya*" (*manomayadharmakāyasya tathāgatasyâitad adhivacanaṃ*)[637] are beyond the comprehension of *tīrthakas,* Śrāvakas, Pratyekabuddhas and Bodhisattvas of the seventh stage or lower.[638] The passage does not, it seems to me, give enough information on this peculiar notion of a *manomayadharmakāya* for us to be sure what is intended by it, and we may just have to chalk it up as another of the many LAS puzzles.

It would take us too far outside the simple chronological presentation I intend to govern my overall exposition of the materials to pursue the post-Pāli-canonical vicissitudes of the notion of *manomayakāya* any further here,[639] though we will touch upon some of these doctrines again at relevant points in the discussion below.

[637] Suzuki here translates "*There is another* name for the Tathāgata *when* his Dharmakāya *assumes* a will-made body;" 165, my emphases. I cannot see how he gets the additional meaning he seems to insert here out of the Sanskrit, and it seems that this translation is merely a constructive attempt to construe the puzzling *manomayadharmakāya* in some doctrinally coherent interpretation.

[638] Nanjio 191-193, Suzuki 164-166.

[639] For a summary of doctrines of *manomayakāya* in Yogācāra/Vijñaptimātra texts, including YBh, MSA, *Abhidharmasamuccaya,* and **Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi,* see Kubota, "*Manasu* no torikkusutāsei", 33-40.

These few examples, however, serve to further problematise any simplistic notion that *manomayakāya* is primarily or even more than marginally significant as a precedent to *nairmāṇikakāya*. They show, rather, that even in later materials, with the exception (among the examples we examined) of two places where the *Mahāvastu* uses the concept as an adjunct to docetistic Buddhology, *manomayakāya* was usually primarily associated with stages of realisation that, while elevated, fall short of the final soteriological goal (arhatship etc., or the eighth stage of the *bodhisattva* path). They also show that *manomayakāya* was primarily associated not with the Buddha but with other spiritually powerful beings (including Māra!). They also show that the concept underwent its own independent development, along paths in some cases quite far from anything to do with a putative teleological dynamic whereby all bodies lead to *trikāya*. First, as we saw, in some texts interest in the concept had greatly to do with its adoption to the scholastic problem of *antarabhava*. Second, it was applied to the Mahāyāna problem of the precise reasons that *arhats, pratyekabuddhas* and lesser *bodhisattvas* are inferior to the Buddha. Third, it may have played a strange role in the personalist doctrines of some *pudgalavāda* texts. All of these applications, around which much of the later interest in the concept plays, were unprecedented in the Pāli materials. Conversely, the "snake slough" model from DN 2, whereby *manomayakāya* is elaborated as a logical and necessary step on a meditative path to liberation, seems to have fallen entirely by the wayside in any of the later texts we examined. On the whole, then, it seems overly simplistic to regard early Pāli-canonical *manomayakāya* doctrines as directly related to later doctrines of special *kāya,* at least in the sense that it somehow is a direct progenitor of any of those later notions.

Chapter 2.4 Conclusions: Ideas about bodies in the earliest Pāli materials

In this chapter, we have examined three main strands of doctrine and practice relating to the body in early Pāli Buddhism: materials concerning given embodiments and the various reasons they are unsatisfactory; the widespread discourse that characterises the religious ideal as a state of undying, that is, invulnerability to or transcendence of bodily death; and the doctrine of *manomayakāya,* which posits the possibility of elaborating a special kind of body at an advanced stage of the path, as a stepping stone to the attainment of various supernatural powers and superknowledges that in turn lead directly to ultimate liberation, and which more broadly associates this same kind of body with the more rarefied reaches of the cosmological schema. It remains here only to identify a few general themes in the overall understanding of embodiment in early Pāli Buddhism that run through these materials, by way of conclusion to this chapter.

First, it is notable that the general attitude towards given embodiment in these materials is almost uniformly negative. This is the case across quite a wide range of dimensions of given embodiment: there are problems, it seems, with our ordinary physical body as such. It is susceptible to pain, and also to pleasure as a lure to further future suffering, and its failures together epitomise the state of suffering that constitutes the religious problem. There are also problems with our ordinary social body, which is deeply inscribed with a false system of values that celebrates and promotes the continuation of worldly life. There are also problems with our usual *relation to* our given embodiments. We are blind to the changeability and mortality of the body, and narcissistically overvalue the body in the face of its ordinary materiality and its disgusting impurity. These overwhelmingly negative connotations attach at several different

points to the word *kāya* itself,[640] so that the eventual elaboration of ideas of perfect *kāya* represent a remarkable conquest of these negative connotations.

This negativity, it could be argued, even persists as a tacit theme through the only two doctrines in all that we surveyed that come close to warranting the description "ideal body". We saw that this label could, first, be applied in a sense to the body of the ideal monastic as prescribed by the *vinaya*. Even here, however, I argued that this "ideal body" is "ideal" only insofar as it is better than what we start with, and a stepping-stone on the way to liberation, but it is not an end in itself; and, further, that this body is only a "body" within the limits circumscribed by its paradoxical status as an embodiment that enacts symbolically the deconstruction of the social body. We also saw that the *manomayakāya* is in a sense an "ideal body", insofar as it is a body that is better than the ordinary given physical body, which gets discarded immediately before the *manomayakāya* is elaborated, and insofar as it also acts as a stepping-stone towards the realisation of the religious ideal. *Manomayakāya,* too, however, first of all enacts a kind of disembodiment, in that it is elaborated by *sloughing off* the ordinary body; and it, too, is a kind of paradoxical non-body, inasmuch as its defining features (in the supernatural powers it grants access to) are almost all the precise opposites of the normal physical limitations and finitude that hamper the ordinary physical body. In both cases, then, these partially "ideal bodies" enact a kind of denial of corporeality in one sense or another, and in both senses the "ideal embodiment" attained is presumably itself to be transcended in turn upon arrival at the end of the path.

Looking ahead to the later stages of doctrinal history that will occupy us in subsequent chapters, therefore, perhaps the most striking feature of doctrines of embodiment in this phase

[640] Especially in *kāyânusmṛti, satkāyadṛṣṭi*, the use of the word *kāya* to describe the ordinary unsatisfactory body in the DN 2 *Sāmaññaphala* model just before the "snake slough" model of *manomayakāya.*

of Buddhist doctrinal development examined in this chapter is not so much any of the actual doctrines we have studied, but the glaring *absence* among them of any full-blown doctrine of an ideal body at all. As I hinted in the introduction to this chapter, I think that this general tendency to a negative characterisation of or attitude towards the ordinary world in the content of doctrine, and the absence of any corresponding positive characterisation of the religious ideal, is typical of an overall tendency (which is, of course, not by any means total) to ineffabilism in early Pāli Buddhism.[641] All we need to do, in religious doctrine, is speak accurately and powerfully to the nature of the religious *problem;* the religious ideal, it seems, is left to "speak for itself".

This general tendency to ineffabilism was to be balanced by other developments in certain quarters of the tradition as the centuries passed. One set of such developments was still seen during the period of Pāli-canonical Buddhism, and they might be accurately characterised as the first special embodiments of the Buddha we find in the tradition. As we shall see, none of these special embodiments is yet called *kāya*, and perhaps for this reason, they have been almost entirely neglected in studies of "Buddha bodies" to date. Yet it is possible to see in them many important elements in the overall development of ideas about the ways it is considered possible to be embodied of Buddhism in relation to fundamental religious problematics. It is to the examination of these first special aspects of the embodiment of the Buddha that we turn in the next chapter.

[641] See once more n. 39-42 for relevant definitions.

<u>CHAPTER THREE: EMBODIMENTS IN THE LATER PĀLI-CANONICAL PERIOD: TOWARDS MORE POSITIVE IDEAS OF THE ADEQUATE EMBODIMENT OF THE BUDDHA</u>

<u>Introduction</u>

In the previous chapter, we saw that those ideas about the body that can, on various grounds, be assigned with probability to the earliest layers of Pāli-canonical Buddhism do not include any ideas about special embodiments of the Buddha. Rather, the focus is, on the whole, on ideas about ordinary given embodiment, both physical and social, that is, on the embodiments of ordinary sentient beings (*pṛthagjana*). In keeping with this focus, the emphasis in the earliest Pāli-canonical materials about the body is also negative; the texts focus on various ways in which ordinary given embodiments are unsatisfactory, and it emerges from an examination of these various materials that the our given embodiment is a central part of the overall problematic of suffering, and therefore deeply entwined in the overall existential problem to which early Buddhism presents itself as a salvific solution.

We also saw that the only special or extraordinary form of embodiment we did find among those materials, the *manomayakāya,* is by no means predicated especially of the Buddha, nor is it indeed even a special property of Arhats, as a broader class of beings who have realised the Buddhist spiritual goal (though the power to elaborated a *manomayakāya* seems certainly to be among the powers promised by the model of the path found in the *Sāmaññaphala-sutta*). Rather, it is a kind of magical body, characterised by special freedom from the usual constraints of physical matter, time and space, command over which is the broad property of a number of classes of gods and spiritually powerful beings, a class that simply includes accomplished meditators as one of its sub-categories. The *manomayakāya,* therefore, though it is on occasion

(relatively unusually) predicated of the Buddha himself, is certainly not a special property of the Buddha, and cannot be understood as a "Buddha body" in any meaningful sense.

In this chapter, we turn to a limited set of materials, all appearing for the first time in layers of the Pāli-canonical record that for various reasons seem not to be the earliest materials we have (or in the material record, but datable to the same period), in which the first, somewhat hazy ideas of special embodiments of the Buddha do emerge.

However, one of the main senses in which this dissertation departs from previous scholarship is that I will argue that these ideas do *not* appear primarily in the quarters where they have been identified by previous scholarship. That is to say, I will argue that there is not sufficient evidence in the Pāli canon for us to think that the Buddhism to which it attests knew any significant notion of the *dhammakāya/dharmakāya,* despite the general assumption to date that it did. By contrast, I will argue that Pāli-canonical Buddhism rather knows only one form of special embodiment for the Buddha, which is at best partial and prototypical, and which has been neglected to a greater or lesser degree by studies of the history of the Buddha's embodiments to date. This embodiment is the body characterised by the thirty-two marks of the *mahāpuruṣa.* I will further argue that it is best to view it as a special embodiment of the *bodhisattva* first, and only of the Buddha in a derivative sense (in that the Buddha retains that same body through the remainder of his last earthly incarnation after his awakening); even the body of marks, therefore, falls one step short of constituting a special body of the Buddha in the full sense, and this has the important implication that in fact *no* such special embodiment of the Buddha is to be clearly found in all the Pāli-canonical materials.

I will thus argue as follows.

In Chapter 3.1, I will examine the first evidence in our record of the doctrine that the Buddha's body is characterised by the thirty-two marks of the *mahāpuruṣa* or "great man". I will argue, against the general view in previous scholarship, that there is little evidence to suggest that the doctrine of the *mahāpuruṣa* is taken from anything external or prior to Buddhism itself, except for the frequent assertion in the Buddhist canon that this idea is a piece of Brahminical learning; it is thus best for us, for the purposes of intellectual history, to treat the doctrine as a domestic Buddhist innovation elaborated very nearly from whole cloth. In conjunction with this argument, I will also argue against a strand of interpretation that has held that those aspects of the doctrine of the *mahāpuruṣa* with relatively strong corporeal implications are merely inherited from the common Indic cultural context, whereas the true Buddhist conception of the *mahāpuruṣa* is an "ethical" one that conceives of the "great man" primarily in terms of the attainment of the Buddhist liberatory goal. Not only is there no evidence outside the Buddhist canon to support such a claim that the corporeal view is originally non-Buddhist; it is also the case that the preponderance of the material in the Pāli canon itself advances or assumes precisely the corporeal version of this idea, and those "ethical" passages that do exist may well be a later graft upon an earlier, truly Buddhist corporeal ideal.

This conception of the body of the Buddha as bearing the thirty-two marks, I will argue, is thus the earliest place in the tradition where we see any hint of the idea that there is something special about the Buddha's embodiment. It is also (not coincidentally) the first place in the tradition where we see the possibility envisaged of an embodiment that could be a good in and of itself, as opposed to the negative view of ordinary given embodiments, on the one hand, and the *manomayakāya* as at best a limited good as a means to greater ends, on the other, in the earlier Pāli materials. Nonetheless, there remains significant limitations to the extent to

which the "body of marks" can be considered a special embodiment of the Buddha, in the full sense in which we will deploy that concept in this study.

First, while the body of the Buddha is characterised as *bearing* these marks, my characterisation of the resultant body as "a body of marks", it must be clearly noted, is an etic analytic expedient, and the Pāli-canonical materials themselves do not yet speak of any special "body", different from an ordinary body, that is so characterised. Thus, while the Buddha's body is special, there is as yet no indication that this makes it a radically different *kind* of body from the given bodies of other, ordinary sentient beings.

Second, and more significantly, it is notable that the "body of marks" is a characteristic, most precisely, not so much of the Buddha as of the *bodhisattva* who is destined to become the Buddha, though of course the Buddha continues to bear the marks throughout the last lifetime that he begins as a *bodhisattva* and in which he realises his Buddhahood. The marks, in many of the passages in which they feature, are present at birth, and indeed, that is part of their point, since they serve as physiognomic signs upon the basis of which prognostications can be made about the wondrous destiny of this most special of beings; but the Buddha is, of course, not yet a Buddha at birth, but only a *bodhisattva* in his last lifetime. Moreover, as we shall see, the tradition was to develop before the close of the Pāli-canonical period whereby the body of marks was understood as the fruit of the vast merit that had accrued to the *bodhisattva* over his many lifetimes of extraordinarily virtuous practice. In both these respects, the body of marks is, in a significant sense, "backward looking", in that its emphasis is on the *bodhisattva* career of the being who was to become the Buddha, that is, on his past and its effects in his last earthly lifetime. Nowhere, however, is there any hint that the body of marks is especially linked to the special status of the Buddha posterior to his enlightenment *per se,* and even less is there any

indication that the body of marks has any existence, let alone any role, after his final *parinirvāṇa*. This means, of course, that the "body of marks", at least as it features in the Pāli-canonical materials, fails to fulfil what we shall subsequently see is one of the major functional roles of true Buddha-bodies; it cannot serve as an embodiment of the full presence of the living Buddha after his *parinirvāṇa,* and it therefore does not extend his salvific efficacy in the world.

In both these respects, then, the "body of marks" falls short of qualifying for the title of "a special body of the Buddha" in the full sense that will interest us in this study. In both these respects, as I will argue in a subsequent section of this dissertation, we have to wait for the first special body of the Buddha in Buddhist history until the period immediately after the Pāli-canonical period, when we encounter the first such body in a quarter somewhat surprising in light of the standard narrative of Buddha-body doctrine current in the field – in his relics. I will leave those arguments, however, to the appropriate section of this dissertation and the appropriate place in my chronology.

In order to support my claim that there is in fact no special embodiment of the Buddha *per se* in the Pāli-canonical period, and that relics are therefore the earliest such special Buddha bodies, it will be also necessary for me to argue against a common understanding that there is in fact such a conception present in the Pāli canonical materials. As is well known, the tradition itself, and following it, secondary scholarship to date, has generally held that the earliest Buddhist texts, including the Pāli canon but also its Āgama analogues, do in fact contain such a conception – the *dhammakāya/dharmakāya*, or Dharma body of the Buddha.

In Chapter 3.2, therefore, I will examine the evidence that is usually adduced to show that the *dhammakāya* was already known to Pāli-canonical Buddhism, and I will conclude that when we

properly contextualise the passages concerned, and when we interpret them in their own terms rather than through the lenses of anachronistically applied later concepts, there is not sufficient evidence to show that the **dharmakāya,*[642] in any of the senses in which that concept was later current, is in fact present in any of that evidence. The evidence, as we shall see, is in any case very slender, amounting to one usage of the word *dhammakāya,* in a very uncertain sense, and in a context into which it was almost certainly interpolated, but which has little to do with the status of the Buddha or his body; and to two other, similarly *sui generis* passages, each of which, upon scrutiny, does not necessarily support the interpretation that it is speaking either of the Buddha's embodiment, or of anything truly equivalent thereto.

This means, of course, that the field to date, in assuming that the **dharmakāya* is already present in the Pāli canon, has overlooked the question of its actual origin, which is now thrown wide open. We will turn to the examination of the evidence for the actual origins of the concept in Chapter 4 of this dissertation.

In Chapter 3.3, which serves as the general conclusion to this chapter, I will summarise the larger lessons and themes that emerge from the consideration of these materials relating to the actual first emergence of ideas about special bodies of the Buddha, and in so doing, attempt to locate the developments we have surveyed in this chapter in the larger narrative of the development of ideas of embodiment in Buddha as a whole, in particular looking forward to the stages of development we will study in subsequent chapters of this dissertation.

Finally, the phantom notion of a Pāli-canonical **dharmakāya* turns out not to be the only set of materials in the Pāli canon that have been misconstrued. Similarly, too many secondary

[642] For my reasons for this orthography, see n. 794 below.

scholars have assumed that the concepts of *sôpadhiśeṣa-* and *nirupadhiśeṣanirvāṇadhātu*, "the realm of *nirvāṇa* with/without remainder", are congruent in the Pāli canon with later interpretations. In later contexts, these terms were understood to refer to the state of an enlightened while still attended by a "vestigial" ordinary flesh-and-blood body, and the state of the same being after their final *parinirvāṇa,* respectively. The corporeal interpretation of these conceptswill come into play later in the present study, and to prepare the ground for the consideration of that later material, I have attempted to straighten out the actual significance and evolution of these concepts in the Pāli materials in an appendix to the present chapter (Section 3.4). I contend that the terms originally had an entirely different significance. It is only in a very small number of anomalous contexts that anything like the later "corporeal" interpretation is found in the Pāli canon at all, and even then, previous scholars have been wrong to think that the passage usually identified as the *locus classicus* for these concepts (*Itivuttaka* 44) is entirely in line with the later interpretation.

Chapter 3.1 The thirty-two marks of the *mahāpuruṣa*

As is well known, the body of the Buddha is said in various Buddhist texts to be characterised by thirty-two marks of the "great man" (Skt. *mahāpuruṣa,* Pāli *mahāpurisa*). For the convenience of the reader, I here give the most standard list of the marks in the Pāli canon, as it appears in DN 14 the *Mahāpadāna-sutta*:

(1) feet with level tread (*suppatiṭṭhitapādo*);

(2) wheels with a thousand spokes on the soles of his feet, "complete with felloe and hub" (*heṭṭhāpādatalesu cakkāni jātāni sahassārāni sanemikāni sanābhikāni sabbākāraparipūrāṇi*);

(3) projecting heels (*āyatapaṇhi*);

(4) long fingers and toes (*dīghaṇgulī*);

(5) soft and tender hands and feet (*mudutaḷuṇahatthapādo*);

(6) net-like hands and feet (var. webbed fingers and toes; *jālahatthapādo*);

(7) high-raised ankles (*ussaṇkhapādo*);

(8) legs like an antelope's (*eṇijaṇgho*);

(9) that he can touch and rub his knees with either hand while standing without bending (*ṭhitako'va anonamanto ubhohi pāṇitalehi channukāni parimasati parimajjati*);

(10) male organs enclosed in a sheath (*kosohitavatthaguyho*);

(11) a bright complexion the colour of gold (*suvaṇṇavaṇṇo kañcanasannibhattaco*);

(12) skin delicate and smooth so that no dust adheres to it (*sukhumacchavi, sukhumattā chaviyā rajojallaṃ kāye na upalippati*);

(13) separate body-hairs, one to each pore (*ekekalomo, ekekāni lomāni loma kūpesu jātāni*);

(14) body-hairs growing upwards, bluish-black like collyrium, growing in rings to the right (*uddhaggalomo, uddhaggāni lomāni jātāni nīlāni añjanavaṇṇāni kuṇḍalāvattāni dakkhiṇāvatta*);

(15) a divinely straight body (*brahmujjugatto*);

(16) seven convex surfaces (*sattussado*);

(17) a front part of the body like a lion's (*sīhapubbaddhakāyo*);

(18) no hollow between the shoulders (*citantaraṃso*);

(19) proportioned like a banyan-trees so that height is equal to armspan (*nigrodhaparimaṇḍalo yāvatakvassa kāyo tāvatakvassa byāmo, yāvatakvassa byāmo tāvatakvassa kāyo*);

(20) an evenly rounded chest (*samavattakkhandho*);

(21) a perfect sense of taste (*rasaggasaggī*);

(22) jaws like a lion's (*sīhahanu*);

(23) forty teeth (*cattāḷīsadanto*);

(24) even teeth (*samadanto*);

(25) no spaces between the teeth (*avivara danto*);

(26) very bright canine teeth (*susukkadāṭho*);

(27) a very long tongue (*pahūtajivho*);

(28) a Brahmā-like voice, like that of the *karavīka* bird (*brahmassaro karavīkabhāṇī*);

(29) deep blue eyes (*abhinīlanetto*);

(30) eyelashes like a cow's (*gopakhumo*);

(31) white, soft hair like cotton down between the eyes (*uṇṇā bhamukantare jātā odātā mudutūlasannihā*);

(32) a turban-shaped protruberance on the head (*uṇhīsasīsokajātāni*).[643]

[643] Adapted from Walshe, 205-260: Omitted here are repetitions occasioned by the application of an expository formula to each mark. This DN 14 listing is repeated verbatim in the first part of DN 30,

It is not my intention here to enter into a detailed study of the marks, the full history of the ideas laid out about them in various texts beyond the Pāli sources,[644] or the vexed question of the individual nature and significance of specific marks.[645] To do so would in some cases merely repeat information available elsewhere in the secondary literature,[646] and would lead us too far astray in the context of the present study.

Further, as Senart correctly perceived so long ago,[647] a full study of the idea of the *mahāpuruṣa* and its application in the Buddhist context would also entail an examination of the concept of the "wheel-turning king" (*cakravartirāja,* who as we shall see below is said in several canonical passages to be a *mahāpuruṣa* just as much as the Buddha), and also of all the points of relation between that ideal and the concept of the Buddha. Such a study, however, would also take us too far afield from the focus on embodiment that is our primary concern here, and below I will barely touch upon the relation with the *cakravartirāja.*

Walshe 441-442; and MN 92, the *Brahmāyu-sutta*, where, however, the surrounding wording is not the same as in these other two texts. DN 30, the *Lakkhaṇa-sutta,* goes into more detail subsequent to the first listing of the marks, and there presents the marks in a unique order, arranging them according to the logic of the explanation by merit generated in prior lives. We will return to these texts below.

[644] Wimalaratana Ch. IV provides a conspectus of later commentarial elaborations on the nature of each of the marks in the tradition. See Lopez infra and Lamotte 279 for secondary bibliography on the *uṣṇīṣa* in particular; and Lamotte for discussion of another mark that has particularly attracted secondary attention, the webbed fingers (*jālâṇgulihastapādaḥ*), 273.

[645] MSV etc. For non- and post-Pāli-canonical sources listing the marks, see the list given by Lamotte, MPPŚ 271-272 n. 2a-d. See also Wimalaratana Chapter II for a (somewhat flawed) treatment of the doctrine as it appears in some later sources; Edgerton s.v. *lakṣaṇa.*

[646] See especially Wimalaratana, *Concept of the Great Man;* also Burnouf, *Lotus* 553-583, based upon DN 14 and 30, the *Dharmapradīpikā, Dharmasaṃgraha, Lalitavistara,* and Rémusat's *Vocabulaire pentaglotte*; Senart, *Essai sur la légende du Buddha* 87-160; Lamotte, MPPŚ 271-281; Wayman, "Contributions"; Konow, *Two First Chapters* 48-57; Lopez, "Buddha"; Rhys Davids, "Introduction" to *Lakkhaṇa-sutta, Dialogues of the Buddha* III, 132-136.

[647] See Senart, infra. The perception of the centrality of this relation constitutes a central structuring principle of Senart's study.

As is well-known, in post-Pāli-canonical times, the thirty-two major marks came to be associated with eighty further minor marks (*anuvyañjana*); these "minor marks" first appear in texts like the *Lalitavistara,* the *Milindapañha,* the *Buddhavaṃsa* (which only mentions but does not list them), the *Apadāna* etc. I feel that the addition of these minor marks is only of relatively slight importance for the development of doctrines of embodiment overall, however, since it is just "more of the same", whereas the development of a doctrine of marks *per se* represents an important separate development in the overall landscape of ideas about the Buddha's body. For this reason, I will not go into the minor marks further here. Readers interested in this development are referred to sources listed in various secondary works.[648]

My intention here, then, is rather: first, to survey the range of different ideas present in the Pāli materials about both the *mahāpuruṣa* and the marks (these two topics only sometimes coinciding); second, to try and determine as accurately as possible when various ideas about the special physiognomy of the Buddha first enter the record; and third, to consider the place of those ideas and their implications within the larger history of ideas about embodiment.

To this end, the first task to hand is to lay out the range of ideas found in the Pāli canon about marks and the *mahāpuruṣa*. Most of the sources I consider below have been considered before me by other scholars, but some passages listed here have not been included in prior treatments. There is, however, no Western-language treatment that I know of that systematically lays out the full range of ideas about *mahāpuruṣa* and the marks, and attestations to those ideas, in a single place, and prior treatments have often been marred, for my purposes, by three problems: they often mix ideas found in the Pāli materials with ideas from later sources; some treatments

[648] See e.g. Edgerton s.v. *anuvyañjana*; also Guang 25, 29-31, 32-34. The eighty minor marks are listed as given in the *Mahāvastu* in Wimalaratana, Appendix II, 193-195.

seem to be shaped by implicit normative visions of what early Buddhism *should* be and say (such as Rhys Davids, Wimalaratana); and none has seriously attempted to determine what we can tell about the relative chronology of these ideas in the Pāli-canonical period against independent (non-doctrinal) criteria. For these reasons, it seems necessary to engage in at least the brief survey of texts and ideas below, in order to place these ideas correctly in the context of our larger narrative of ideas regarding embodiment in general.

3.1.1 Possible or alleged background in non-Buddhist ideas

Claims that previous scholars have made that the doctrine of the marks is non-Buddhist in origin can be divided into two groups: claims that there was an earlier non-Buddhist tradition of physiognomy in general, and claims that the doctrine of the *mahāpuruṣa* and his marks are derived from Vedic ideas about Puruṣa, the primal man. We will consider each of these in turn.

The evidence cited by prior scholars for pre-Buddhist notions of physiognomy is slight, though I see no real reason to reject the general idea that physiognomy is part of the general stock of cultural ideas in the Indian context. Wimalaratana cites *Atharvaveda* 1.18, which gives spells for driving out unlucky marks.[649] He also cites *Śatapatha Braḥmaṇa* 8.4.4.11 for the general belief in such marks.[650] In trying to show that an art of physiognomy is part of the source for the Buddhist notions studied here, Senart cites *in extenso* the *Bṛhat Saṃhitā* of Varāhamihira;[651] but

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[649] Wimalaratana 20-21; AV 1.18, Whitney I, 19. However, AN 1.18.4 lists "antelope-footed" as an *inauspicious* mark; cf. the Buddha's "legs like an antelope"! Wimalaratana also cites AV 8.115 (VIII 115, *sic*), which, however, I cannot find anywhere in Whitney.

[650] In Eggeling's translation, the passage runs, " . . . he who has a mark (*lakshman*) on his right side is said to have good luck (*punya-lakshmîka*), and on the left side in the case of a woman; for the woman has her position on the left side (of the man) . . . . they say that he who has a (peculiar) mark in his mouth has good luck." Eggeling, trans., *Śatapatha Braḥmaṇa,* IV, 81, i.e. *Sacred Books of the East* vol. 43, 81.

[651] Senart 111-118.

this seems to be a work which dates to the first millennium of the common era.[652] Wimalaratana cites Basham to suggest that such predictions may have prevailed among the Ājīvakas.[653]

It may be the case, then, that though some tradition of physiognomy did exist previously, it was only after the Pāli-canonical period that ideas about physiognomy found their way into the non-Buddhist record in any strength, and that the Pāli-canonical evidence thus constitutes an important chapter in the general Indian history of such ideas. In his *Conjugal Love in India,* a study of texts that largely concern themselves with physiognomy (in the context of match-making) and of the history that forms their context, Kenneth Zysk confines himself to saying that physiognomy is "a fairly ancient art in India".[654] Zysk does not mention this Buddhist evidence, but the earliest textual evidence he mentions is a discussion of physiognomic characteristics of prepubescent girls (*kanyālakṣaṇa*) in Chapter 48 of the *Gargasaṃhitā,* which Zysk asserts dates between the first century B.C.E. and the first century C.E.[655] Zysk also cites, as an early text discussing physiognomy, the *Kāmasūtra*,[656] which he dates to 200-300 C.E.[657] As Zysk points out, Vatsyāyana's requirement that a diviner forecast the future life of the couple,

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[652] *Encyclopaedia Brittanica* gives the remarkably precise dates of 505-587 for Varāhamihira. S.v. "Varahamihira", *Encyclopaedia Brittanica* (online edition), http://www.search.eb.com/eb/article-9074832, accessed January 17 2007.

[653] Wimalaratana 12. He also cites Śatapatha Braḥmaṇa, SBE vol. 43, 81, for a general description of such beliefs.

[654] Zysk, *Conjugal Love,* 14. My attention was drawn to the treatment of physiognomy in Zysk's work by a message posted to the Indology listserv by Ulrich Timme Kragh on 27 November 2007, in response to a query posted by John Powers.

[655] Zysk, 14; Zysk frustratingly does not give any references or reasons for his dating of this text. KS 3.1 requires of a bride "beauty, character, good health, and well proportioned limbs . . . good teeth, nails, ears, hair, eyes and breasts [and a] body . . . naturally free from disease" (Zysk 15-16), and requires the same qualities of the groom.

[656] Zysk 15.

[657] Zysk 8.

based in part upon physiognomic marks,[658] indicates that there must have already been an art of physiognomy current at the time of the compilation of the text,[659] but even so, both the *Kāmasūtra* and the *Gargasaṃhitā* are too late to constitute firm evidence that a non-Buddhist physiognomy predates Pāli-canonical Buddhist materials on the topic.[660]

Ideas about physiognomy are quite common in world cultures, however, and I see no reason to imagine that the whole notion of physiognomy was invented by Buddhists, even if evidence is thin on the ground. When we turn to doctrine about the figure of the *mahāpuruṣa* as distinguished by the marks specifically, however, it seems to me that the story is quite different. There we are dealing with a very particular set of ideas, with a wealth of unique detail, that should have a certain specific historical origin that is not duplicable in other cultural contexts. This doctrine, as it appears in Buddhist texts, has been regularly (and quite vaguely) traced by prior scholars to the Vedic cosmogonical Puruṣa, or the Viṣṇu-Nārāyana/Puruṣa Nārāyaṇa "of mythology and mysticism".[661] As Donald Lopez briefly points out, however, there are significant problems with this theory,[662] and indeed, I have been able to find no convincing evidence that we should take seriously the claim that this concept has pre-Buddhist or non-Buddhist origins.

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658 Zysk 16.

659 Zysk 17.

660 The two texts that form the main objects of Zysk's study, the *Ratiśāstra* and the *Ratiramaṇa*, are both extremely late, dating from the 16th century CE at the earliest; 28, 29.

661 Comments by Senart 122 ff., cited in agreement by Konow 69, 78, cited in Wayman, "Contributions" 245-246.

662 Lopez, "Buddha" 25. Lopez ascribes the theory principally to Rhys Davids (for whom see immediately below), and focuses on the fact "pre-Buddhist lists" (if indeed such exist! Lopez gives no references, but I have been unable to find any) do not include the *uṣṇīṣa.*

The most extensive argument for non-Buddhist precedents or parallels (allowing for uncertainty about relative dates in some cases) to the Buddhist notion of the *mahāpuruṣa* seems still to be the work of Senart (published in 1886!). Senart begins by citing a striking parallel to the Buddhist doctrine from *Mahābhārata* 12,[663] and then says, "If one takes into account scattered traits . . . which are attributed to the supreme Puruṣa elsewhere; and if, on the other hand, one considers that a good number of these characteristics (and not the least significant of them) . . . are found among the Buddhist *lakṣaṇas,* a double conclusion imposes itself upon the mind: that these traits belong properly to Puruṣa himself, and that the Buddhist *mahāpuruṣa* is no different from this figure."[664] It seems most likely, however, that the MBh text Senart cites is too late to serve as any evidence for precedents to Buddhism, and that it is more plausible

[663] Senart 91, citing from MBh 12, the "Śāntiparvan". Nārada voyages to the isle of Śvetadvīpa to receive the teaching of Puruṣa (or Mahāpuruṣa). Nārada then returns and sees the two *ṛṣis* Nara and Nārāyaṇa thus: "With their light they surpass the splendour of the sun and illuminate all things; they wear their matted hair in a circle; they have fingers and toes joined by a membrane, feet marked by the sign of the wheel, large chests, and long arms; they have four testicles [each, presumably, if the fact is worth noting!; Ganguli notes var. "shoulder-knots", perhaps referring to four arms], sixty teeth, and eight canines; their voices are as powerful as the roaring of the clouds ["as deep as that of the clouds", Ganguli; i.e. like thunder?]; [they are] handsome, with high foreheads, perfect eyebrows, cheeks and noses, with heads like an umbrella; - thus were these divine beings, endowed with signs, known as *mahāpuruṣas*": Skt. *tejasābhyadhikau sūryāt sarvalokavirocanāt/ śrīvatsalakṣaṇau pūjyau jaṭāmaṇḍaladhāriṇau/ jālapādabhujau tau tu pādayoś cakralakṣaṇau/ vyūḍhoraskau dīrghabhujau tathā muṣkacatuṣkiṇau/ ṣaṣṭidantāv aṣṭadaṁṣṭrau meghaughasadr̥śasvanau/ svāsyau pr̥thulalāṭau ca suhanū subhrunāsikau/ ātapatreṇa sadr̥śe śirasī devayos tayoḥ/ evaṁ lakṣaṇasaṁpannau mahāpuruṣasaṁjñitau.* This is 12.331.24-27 of the Sanskrit text; Sukthankar and Belvalkar 16, 1926-1927; also translated at Ganguli §CCCXLIV, vol. IV, 172. See also, as Senart notes (92), the passage describing the residents of Śvetadvīpa in similar terms, Ganguli §CCCXXXVI; there, however, we note the additional points that inhabitants of this land have "no senses" and "live without taking food of any kind" (cf. denizens of the Buddhist *ārūpyadhātu*); have "bones and bodies . . . as hard as thunder (sic., *vajra*)" (see Ch. 5 of this dissertation for similar doctrines in Buddhism); are "endowed with . . . great strength" (cf. similar Mahāyāna doctrines about the Buddha); and have "many tongues" (cf. the very long tongue of the Buddha; Senart's translation differs, however, and has them much closer to the Buddha on this point: "leurs langues lèchent tout entier leur visage comparable au soleil", 92); Ganguli IV, 118; *śvetāḥ pumāṁso gatasarvapāpāś; cakṣurmuṣaḥ pāpakr̥tāṁ narāṇām/ vajrāsthikāyāḥ samamānonmānā; divyānvayarūpāḥ śubhasāropetāḥ/ chatrākr̥tiśīrṣā meghaughaninādāḥ; satpuṣkaracatuṣkā rājīvaśatapādāḥ/ ṣaṣṭyā dantair yuktāḥ śuklair; aṣṭābhir daṁṣṭrābhir ye/ jihvābhir ye viṣvagvaktraṁ; lelihyante sūryaprakhyam;* Sukthankar and Belvalkar 16, 1819-1820. Sanskrit here taken from John Smith's revised version of Tokunaga Muneo's electronic text of the MBh, available from http://bombay.indology.info/mahabharata/statement.html, downloaded January 15 2007. For a photograph of an iconographic representation of Nara and Nārāyaṇa sporting the marks, see frontispiece to Fitzgerald. Unfortunately, the current passages are not included in the portion of the text Fitzgerald translates.

[664] Senart 93.

rather that the doctrine entered MBh at this point *from* Buddhism.[665] This means that the remarkable parallels between the doctrine of Puruṣa found in this passage (and further MBh passages cited by Senart) and Buddhist ideas are, if anything, likely to be evidence of Buddhist influence on epic thought; this point is of interest in its own right, of course, but for our current purpose, that is, to trace the origin and development of the Buddhist ideas in and of themselves, it means that the epic passages are not particularly relevant.

Like T. W. Rhys Davids,[666] Senart also,[667] when he turns from his epic passage, traces the antecedents of this "doctrine of Great Puruṣa" (mahāpuruṣa) back to the "Puruṣa-Sūkta" of the *Ṛg-veda.*[668] Absent the more startling but most likely anachronistic evidence that associates the Vedic/Hindu Puruṣa with the figures characterised by the marks in MBh 12, however, the logic by which this connection is made remains impenetrable, at least to me. The only possible connection we seem to be able to find between the contents of RV 10.90 and the Buddhist

[665] On the date of the "Śāntiparvan", an unsigned note to the internet version of Ganguli (at http://www.sacred-texts.com/hin/m12/index.htm, accessed January 15 2007), which I do not find in the printed version, states: "The Santi Parva is a huge interpolation in the Mahabharata, in the genre known as 'wisdom literature.' The narrative progression is placed on hold almost from the first page. Instead we get a long and winding recapitulation of Brahmanic lore, including weighty treatises on topics such as kingcraft, metaphysics, cosmology, geography, and mythology. There are discussions of the Sankya and Yoga philosophical schools, and mentions of Buddhism. It is apparent that the Santi Parva was added to the Mahabharata at a later time than the main body of the epic." This opinion is confirmed by the bulk of scholarship. Hopkins says of the "masses of didactic matter" in which this section is included that their "intrusion" is to be dated between 200 B.C. and 100-200 A.D., Hopkins 398; he calls these sections "pseudo-epic" and speaks further about the addition of "this great appendix", 381, with reference to an article in which he studied the problem. Deshpande follows Hopkins, 9-10. So, too, does van Buitenen in broad outline; van Buitenen, xxv. Fitzgerald does not give an explicit date for the work, but places the entire *Śāntiparvan,* which he speaks of as a library of lore, in the context of a shift in notions of *dharma* that he sees as having been precipitated by Mauryan and Śuṇga rule, 100-128, and in this context, speaks of the *Mokṣadharmaparvan,* the third part of the *Śāntiparvan* in which the current passage falls, as "an anthology of texts dealing with the newer sort of dharma, the dharma of ultimate personal beatitude and Absolute Escape (*mokṣa*) from rebirth"; 142.

[666] Rhys Davids, *Dialogues* III, 132-133.

[667] Senart 94-96.

[668] RV 10.90, Doniger 29-32.

doctrine of the marks is that it involves an analytic mode of treatment of the body of a divinity, whereby each of the individual parts (mouth, arms, thighs, mind etc.) has a certain significance; beyond this, nothing reminiscent of any of the individual thirty-two marks appears. It seems likely, therefore, that the only implicit point of connection that warrants the treatment of this hymn as an antecedent to the Buddhist doctrine is the mere use of the word *puruṣa* (Pāli *purisa*) to refer to a deity (in RV cosmogony) or a religious paragon (in the Buddha). Senart and Rhys Davids seem to be attempting to account for the use of the term *puruṣa* in reference to the bearer of the marks by appeal to this precedent.

Both Rhys Davids and Senart[669] also refer to Atharva-veda 10.2[670] as further evidence that the Vedic notion of Puruṣa is an antecedent to the Buddhist notion of the *mahāpuruṣa* of the marks. This text, however, once more reflects little reminiscent of the doctrine of marks, but rather accounts for the *origin* of "man" (*puruṣa;* whether that refers to the cosmic deity or the human race is of little import for us here); the answer given to a string of various questions about the origin of man is that *brahman,* or Atharvan, created the multifarious dimensions of his being. It is true that some minor details here recall to mind the Buddhist marks. For example, the tongue of the *puruṣa* is said to be "ample" (*purūcī̂*), and he has a "great voice" (*mahī̂m . . . vā̆cam*),[671] recalling the "very long tongue" and "Brahmā-like voice" (which, moreover, are grouped together at least in the DN 14 list cited above). "Man" is further associated with gold, and light;[672] these might perhaps recall to mind, vaguely, the bright complexion golden in

[669] Senart translates this hymn in full, 98-103.

[670] Whitney II, 567-572.

[671] AV 10.2.7, Whitney 568.

[672] AV 10.2.31-32, esp. *tásyāṃ hiraṇyáyaḥ kóśaḥ svargó jyótiṣā̆vṛtaḥ;* speaking, in a typical Vedic pun, of man as a "stronghold" (*púr*) of *bráhman,* whence he is called *púruṣa;* Whitney 571.

colour. These details, however, are far too few to establish any firm line of descent from this text to any Buddhist notion, and Senart, who discusses the passage in most detail, can give no stronger reasons for associating the two concepts than that the text enumerates body parts, and that among these are some of those also found in the Buddhist scheme: the ankles, tread of the feet, tongue, voice, jaw etc (none of which is actually characterised as is the Buddhist mark for the relevant body feature).[673] The common presence of such items in two lists of body parts, however, can be easily explained by the fact that they all appear in the human body, without any need to conjecture textual filiation.

This is the full extent of the evidence provided by Rhys Davids for the supposed Vedic origins of this concept. Senart's discussion rambles over a range of other texts, without at any point showing any closer resemblance between their contents and Buddhist ideas than can be shown for the RV and AV texts already cited. I will not go into similar detail in addressing the remainder of Senart's argument. In general, it seems that Senart's conclusion that the Buddhist concept of the *mahāpuruṣa* was based in non-Buddhist notions has three main sources: (1) a possible incorrect assumption that the MBh 12 passage he begins with predates Buddhist sources of the doctrine of the *mahāpuruṣa*; (2) essentialist/universalist ideas about "solar" deities popular in the scholarship of his time, to which he makes repeated reference; (3) perhaps a general assumption that where the same ideas are found in both Buddhism and the "mainstream" of Indian thought, the Buddhist ideas must be derivative. Given the weakness of Senart's argument, however, it is unfortunate, to say the least, that Senart seems to have acted as the source of a kind of game of "Chinese whispers" whereby scholars have almost univocally[674] assumed that the ideal of the *mahāpuruṣa* derives from non-Buddhist, Vedic ideas,

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[673] Senart 103.

[674] Har Dayal is sceptical of the supposed Vedic origins of certain marks suggested e.g. by Senart, but on grounds that are shaky in their turn. Dayal suggests that the marks derive from a variety of sources: for

without critically examining the evidence for this assertion. As the above summary shows, I have been unable to find any solid evidence in the scholarship to date that this idea is indeed non-Buddhist in its origins; until some such evidence is advanced, it seems to me that it is most logical to understand the idea of a *mahāpuruṣa* characterised by (thirty-two) special marks to derive from Buddhism itself.

This provisional conclusion flies in the face not only of secondary scholarship to date, however, but also of the impression conveyed by the Pāli canon itself, where scholars have found no small justification for the claim that the doctrine of marks reaches beyond Buddhism to pre- and non-Buddhist Indian ideas. Wimalaratana notes, for example, with justification, that there is a strong tendency in Pāli texts to show the basic idea of marks signifying the extraordinary destiny of the *mahāpurisa* as non-Buddhist, i.e. Brāhmanical, idea. Wimalaratana goes so far as to claim, in fact, that it is "*always* stated that the knowledge of the distinguishing marks of a *mahāpurisa* belongs to Brāhmanical wisdom, and the Canon states that it has been enumerated in the *mantras* (of the Veda)."[675] Certainly, it is true that at least two kinds of materials suggest that Buddhists understood the idea of marks in general not to be their special property, or presented these ideas as such.

First, we find the inclusion of apparently physiognomic fortune-telling arts in lists of non-Buddhist practices polemicised against or scorned. For example, DN 1, the *Brahmajāla-sutta,*

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example, he considers aesthetic ideals of physical human beauty the source of the marks of the teeth, chest, hair, eyes etc., and he considers the genital marks symbols of chastity; Dayal 305. Among the sources of the marks, however, he lists, after Foucher, the ideals of Gāndhāran Buddhist art, which in their turn are supposed to derive from Greek norms. If no Buddha images are attested before the Common Era, however, the argument that such art can serve as the source for canonical lists of marks is either anachronistic, or assumes that canonical texts were still being compiled much later than is normally thought. Similarly, Dayal thinks that it is more rational, rather than deriving marks from Vedic ideals, to derive them from "the epithets applied to the heroes of the great epics"; Dayal 304.

[675] "In the *mantras*" = *mantesu;* referring e.g. to DN 3; my emphasis.

includes various fortune-telling arts from physiognomic signs among various low arts (or "beastly arts", *tiracchānavijjā*) that certain recluses and Brahmins earn their living from, but from which the Buddha abstains. These include palmistry (*aṇgaṃ*) and (divining by) body-marks (*lakkhaṇaṃ*).[676] This list is repeated in DN 2, *Sāmaññaphala-sutta*;[677] and then, of course, taken up in repetitions of the DN 2 path in other DN *suttas*. (Wimalaratana cites Jaina sources that likewise condemn such practices.[678]) Wimalaratana suggests, plausibly, that it is likely that the identification of the marks of the "great man" was a part of this more general system of prognostication.[679]

Second, however, the most widespread evidence that an art of identifying marks was understood to be part of Brāhmanical lore is a standard list of the lore mastered by an ideal Brahmin. This list appears more than fifteen times in the canon, and reads thus: "[X is] a scholar, versed in the mantras, accomplished in the Three Vedas, a skilled expounder of the rules and rituals, the lore of sounds and meanings and, fifthly, oral tradition – an expounder, fully versed in natural philosophy and the marks of a Great Man (*mahāpurisalakkhaṇa*)".[680] In the *Soṇadaṇḍa-sutta,* moreover, such learning is explicitly excluded from a Buddhist perspective

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[676] Walshe 71.

[677] Walshe 100.

[678] Wimalaratana 12 n. 5; also the "*Bhagavati Sūtra*", the *Sthānaṇga Sūtra*, and the *Uttaradhyāna Sūtra,* cited 21-22.

[679] See e.g. Wimalaratana 24-25.

[680] *ajjhāyako mantadharo tiṇṇaṃ vedānaṃ pāragū sanighaṇḍukeṭubhānaṃ sākkharappabhedānaṃ itihāsapañcamānaṃ, padako, veyyākaraṇo, lokāyatamahāpurisalakkhaṇesu anavayo*. This list is used to describe Ambaṭṭha in DN 3, Walshe 111-112; the Reverend Soṇadaṇḍa DN 4, Walshe 126; repeated Walshe 129; Soṇadaṇḍa's nephew Angaka later in the same text, 130; Kūṭadanta at DN 5, Walshe 134; King Mahāvijita in same, Walshe 136, repeated 137. See also MN 91, Ñāṇamoli 743; MN 92, Ñāṇamoli 756; MN 93, Ñāṇamoli 763; MN 95, Ñāṇamoli 776, 778; MN 100, Ñāṇamoli 819; AN 3.6.58, "Tikaṇṇa", Woodward and Hare I, 146; AN 3.6.59 "Jānussoṇi", Woodward and Hare I, 150; AN 5.20.192, "Brāhman Doṇa", Woodward and Hare III, 163, 164. There are surprisingly *few* references in KN, mainly concentrated in the *Apadāna* with a few in the *Buddhavaṃsa*.

on what really makes a proper Brahmin,[681] which suggests even more strongly that this list is intended as characteristic of a non-Buddhist perspective.

In several texts, moreover, Brahmins are further portrayed as thinking or saying, in connection with the fact that the Buddha is characterised by the marks, that the list of thirty-two marks has been handed down in their tradition, and that the possessor of such marks will either become a Cakravartirāja (wheel-turning king) or a fully enlightened one etc.[682]

Despite this evidence from within the canon that prognosticatory arts and ideas about marks were identified with non-Buddhist learning, however, the problem remains, as we saw above and as Wimalaratana also acknowledges, that "there is no direct evidence regarding the existence of such a concept in any of the existing four Vedas".[683] The tendency in previous scholarship seems to have been to note this difficulty, only to brush it aside, and continue to regard the doctrine as non-Buddhist on the grounds of the slender evidence advanced by scholars like Senart and Rhys Davids. It is difficult to justify such a move, however, and I fear that it is motivated in part by modern apologetic difficulties that see the idea of marks sit

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681 DN 4, Walshe 130.

682 One such pericope reads: *āgatāni kho panasmākaṃ mantesu dvattiṃsa mahāpurisalakkhaṇāni, yehi samannāgatassa mahāpurisassa dveva gatiyo bhavanti anaññā. sace agāraṃ ajjhāvasati, rājā hoti cakkavattī dhammiko dhammarājā cāturanto vijitāvī janapadatthāvariyappatto sattaratanasamannāgato. tassimāni sattaratanāni bhavanti. seyyathīdaṃ: cakkaratanaṃ hatthiratanaṃ assaratanaṃ. maṇiratanaṃ itthiratanaṃ gahapatiratanaṃ parināyakaratanameva sattamaṃ. parosahassaṃ kho panassa puttā bhavanti sūrā vīraṅgarūpā parasenappamaddanā. so imaṃ paṭhaviṃ sāgarapariyantaṃ adaṇḍena asatthena dhammena abhivijiya ajjhāvasati. sace pana agārasmā anagāriyaṃ pabbajati, arahaṃ hoti sammāsambuddho loke vivaṭṭacchado.* See MN 91, Brahmāyu-sutta, Ñāṇamoli 744; MN 92, Sela-sutta, Ñāṇamoli 757. DN 3 also has Pokkharasāti speak to Ambaṭṭha in almost identical wording, Walshe 112; and slightly variant wording is found in the SuN 3.7 version of the Sela-sutta, Norman 72. A variant verse presentation at SuN 5.1 v. 1000-1003, Norman 129, also ascribes lore about the marks to mantras. It seems noteworthy that in fact, the very notion of knowledge found "in mantras" (*mantesu*) is almost entirely confined to this single idea in the first three Nikāyas; the only other place it is found is in SuN v. 1018, where Ajita asks about the "perfection" of the Buddha "with respect of [vedic] mantras"; Norman 130.

683 Wimalaratana 26. Wimalaratana cites an ingenious attempt at a *deus ex machina* solution of this dilemma put forth by Buddhaghosa.

uneasily with preconceptions about how "rational" Buddhism ought to look; if the idea of marks is originally non-Buddhist, we are already on our way to figuring it as a concession to or corruption by demotic or non-Buddhist influences, and therefore as ultimately somehow extrinsic to what Buddhism is otherwise really about.

The question of the possible non-Buddhist origin of the doctrine of the thirty-two marks of the *mahāpuruṣa* is thus a vexed one, and I do not see any prospect of resolving it on the basis of the materials currently available to me. On the one hand, it is difficult to think of a reason that the Buddhist texts would have so consistently and repeatedly ascribed the idea to Brāhmanical tradition unless it was in fact a part of that tradition. On the other hand, I have been unable to locate any non-Buddhist textual evidence that such a tradition, or anything like it, did indeed exist in the period in question. I do not claim to have any evidence to prove definitively that the idea of marks, and further of special marks distinguishing a class of remarkable beings of which the Buddha was a member, is *not* originally non-Buddhist, but until sound evidence is found that it *is* non-Buddhist, it seems most economical to presume that the first context in which we find these ideas elaborated extensively in the Indian textual record – the Buddhist canon – is in fact the context in which they originated. And it is easy to show, further, that there *is* a widely attested set of special Buddhist ideas about the *mahāpurisa* and his marks. Whatever their origin, then, ideas about marks seem to have been regarded positively and actively elaborated by the Buddhist tradition. It is to this body of evidence of characteristically Buddhist ideas about marks that we now turn.

3.1.2 The Buddhist "ethical" notion of *mahāpuruṣa*

The first dimension of specifically Buddhist notions about the *mahāpurisa* has nothing to do with marks at all. In a number of passages, to which ample, if not excessive, attention has been

paid in the secondary literature, the term *mahāpurisa* is appropriated rather to describe beings who have attained various goals of Buddhist spiritual practice. Indeed, some previous scholars (e.g. Rhys Davids, Wimalaratana, Guang) have indeed shown a strong tendency to foreground these passages as if they tell the *real* story about the Buddhist idea of *mahāpurisa,* and the association with the marks is an unfortunate or latter-day compromise with demotic or other corrupting forces. Given the history of these readings, we must dispose of this "ethical" conception of *mahāpurisa* in order to clear the ground for the consideration of what I shall argue is *mahāpurisa* proper, that is, the conception of a *physical* perfection shown through various physiognomic signs.

T. W. Rhys Davids, for instance, claims[684] that the word *mahāpurisa* is seldom used in the Nikāyas, and all the instances he cites are "ethical", and the passages he cites in this connection provide a good starting-point for the survey of this "ethical" use of the term, as well as a striking instance of the distortions that have been introduced into the study of the marks, and of doctrines of embodiment more generally, by preconceptions about the nature of early Buddhism. According to Rhys Davids, the only three mentions of the term *mahāpurisa* in the Nikāyas are the following. First, in SN 47.11, "Nālandā", Sāriputta questions the Buddha about the term *mahāpurisa,* and he is told that the term applies to one who has a liberated mind, which is defined by the four bases of mindfulness.[685] Again, in AN 4.4.35, "Vassakāra", depicts Vassakāra saying to the Buddha that Brāhmins declare a man a *mahāpurisa* if he has four qualities, that is, (1) being learned; (2) being quick to understand; (3) having good memory; and

[684] *Dialogues* III, 134-135.

[685] Bodhi 1640. On the four bases of mindfulness, see Section 2.1.3 of this dissertation above on mindfulness of the body (which is the first of the four bases), p. 148 ff.

(4) being skilled, diligent, resourceful and capable in the business of a householder.[686] The Buddha replies that he holds four different criteria to be the measure of a *mahāpurisa*: (1) being dedicated to the welfare of many people; (2) being the master of his own thought; (3) being the master of the four *jhānas*; (4) destroying the *āsavas* and attaining release.[687] This doctrine is matched with a verse which does not entirely overlap in its content with the prose *sutta* content: "Skilled with respect to [what comprises] the path and [what does] not, his task accomplished, purged of *āsava*, awakened, in his last body – [such a one] is called 'great in wisdom' and *mahāpurisa*".[688] DhP 352 also characterises the *mahāpurisa* in terms of transcendence of craving and grasping, but also in terms of his learning: "He who is without craving and grasping, who knows the groupings of letters and their sequence – it is he who is called the bearer of the final body, one of profound wisdom, a great man."[689]

Even if we interpret Rhys Davids's pronouncement that these are the only passages that mention the term as referring only to "ethical" uses, Rhys Davids did not catch every reference, however. SuN 5.3 v. 1040-1042 also gives an ethical definition of *mahāpurisa,* as Wimalaratana notes.[690] "'Who is contented here in the world?', asked the venerable Tissa Metteyya. 'For whom are there no commotions . . . . Whom do you call the great man (*mahāpurisa*)?' . . . . 'The bhikkhu who lives the holy life amidst sensual pleasures, Metteyya', said the Blessed One, 'with

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[686] Woodward and Hare II, 40.

[687] Woodwarda and Hare II, 41-42.

[688] *maggāmaggassa kusalo katakicco anāsavo/ buddho antimasārīro mahāpañño mahāpurisoti vuccatīti*; Woodward and Hare II, 42, translation heavily amended.

[689] *vītataṇho anādāno niruttipadakovido/ akkharānaṃ sannipātaṃ jaññā pubbaparāni ca/ sa ve antimasārīro mahāpañño mahāpuriso'ti vuccati;* Narada 267-269, Wallis 73. Note that AN 4.4.35, just cited, has no reference to learning. Is this verse a product of the compromise between *jhāna* and *dhamma* specialists studied by Gombrich (referred to above n. 569)?

[690] Wimalaratana 13. Wimalaratana claims that this passage represents the "earliest idea of *mahāpurisa* in the Pāli Canon".

craving gone, always mindful, quenched after consideration, for him there are no commotions./ That thinker, knowing both ends, does not cling to the middle. Him I call a great man."[691] AN 6.6.61, "The Way to the Beyond" further cites this verse,[692] even referring to the text by name, and comments upon it;[693] and the same passage is commented upon the late canonical *Niddesa*.[694] MN 151, the *Piṇḍapātapārisuddha-sutta,* contains an unusual use of the term in which the Buddha praises Sāriputta for "abiding in the abiding of a great man . . . . namely, voidness (*suññatā*)."[695] DN 34 the *Dasuttara-sutta* contains an odd, seemingly *ad hoc* list of "eight things [that] are to be made to arise", viz. "eight thoughts of a Great Man (*mahāpurisa-vitakkā*)": "This Dhamma is (a) for one of few wants, not many wants; (b) for the contented, not for the discontented; (c) for the withdrawn, not for those delighting in company; (d) for the energetic, not for the lazy; (e) for one of established mindfulness, not for one of lax mindfulness; (f) for one of concentrated mind, not for one who is not concentrated; (g) for one who has wisdom, not for one lacking wisdom; (h) for one who delights in non-proliferation (*nippapañcârāmassa*), not for one who delights in proliferation."[696] At AN 8.3.30, "The Venerable Anuruddha", these

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[691] Norman 132.

[692] Wimalaratana notes that this is evidence that SuN 1040-1042 is relatively early.

[693] Woodward and Hare III, 284-286.

[694] Nd II, 112, cited in Wimalaratana, 14.

[695] Ñāṇamoli 1143: *mahāpurisavihārena kira tvaṃ sāriputta, ekarahi bahulaṃ viharasi. mahāpurisavihāro hesa sāriputta, yadidaṃ suññatā.* The specific interpretation of "abiding in emptiness" applied here is that the monk should review his journey to the village for almsfood to check whether "there was any lust, hate, delusion, or aversion in [his] mind" regarding forms cognizable by each of the six sense-objects in turn; if there was, he should abandon them; but if there was not, he can "abide happy and glad, training day and night in wholesome states"; Ñāṇamoli 1143-1144. The same formula is then applied to the abandonment of the five cords of sensual pleasure, the five hindrances, the five aggregates affected by clinging, the four foundations of mindfulness, the four right kinds of striving, and a number of other doctrinal rubrics. These practices effect the "purification of almsfood" of the title of the *sutta*.

[696] Walshe 518: *appicchassāyaṃ dhammo nāyaṃ dhammo mahicchassa. santuṭṭhassāyaṃ dhammo nāyaṃ dhammo asantuṭṭhassa. pavivittassāyaṃ dhammo nāyaṃ dhammo saṅgaṇikārāmassa. āraddhaviriyassāyaṃ dhammo nāyaṃ dhammo kusitassa. upaṭṭhitasatissāyaṃ dhammo nāyaṃ dhammo muṭṭhassatissa. samāhitassāyaṃ dhammo nāyaṃ dhammo asamāhitassa. paññavato ayaṃ dhammo nāyaṃ dhammo duppaññassa.*

eight thoughts are further the centre of a small pedagogical drama. Anuruddha is depicted as arriving at the first seven as the fruits of his own solitary meditation, but the Buddha arrives magically[697] on the scene to add the eighth to the list; these thoughts are then said to lead to the attainment of the four *jhānas,* contentment with the few possessions of a monk. The Buddha then disappears (again magically) back to a gathering of monks, where he teaches the eight thoughts of the Great Man again, with expanded explanations.[698]

We will return below to the difficult question of where these passages may sit in the relative chronology of the Pāli canon as a whole. For the moment, I want to draw attention to the difficulty posed by this collection of passages for any contention that "the" normative Buddhist doctrine of *mahāpurisa* is "ethical", from the point of view of simple doctrinal content. It is noteworthy that, with the exception of SuN 5.3 v. 1040-1042 repeated at AN 6.6.61 (which is only a partial exception, because AN in fact *cites* the SuN verses by name), all of the models of the *mahāpurisa* seen here only occur once each. This is in contrast with the frequent repetition of pericopae conveying other (more important?) doctrines in multiple texts and parts of the canon. That is to say, nothing here gives the impression that we are dealing with a coherent, well-known orthodox conception of *mahāpurisa*; the impression is rather that in each case we see a more or less *ad hoc* appropriation of a valorised term, on the fly, to make a passing rhetorical point whose doctrinal thrust is elsewhere. This, as we shall see, is also in contrast to the frequent repetition of physical ideas of the *mahāpurisa* in multiple canonical loci, a contrast that suggests that if anything, the physical conception of the *mahāpurisa* is dominant.

Nippapañcassāyaṃ dhammo nāyaṃ dhammo papañcārāmassa, nippapañcaratino ayaṃ dhammo nāyaṃ dhammo papañcaratino'ti.

[697] I.e. in a *manomayakāya.* This same *sutta* is examined for its relevance to doctrines of *manomayakāya* elsewhere in this dissertation, p. 238.

[698] Woodward and Hare IV, 154-160.

In sum, then, it is true that, as Rhys Davids rightly suggests, there is a thread in the Nikāyas that appropriates the term *mahāpurisa* from its more widespread and usual context of association with the marks etc., and reinterprets it in terms of the various schema of Buddhist spiritual practice and attainment. This is certainly an important component of the overall landscape of ideas about *mahāpurisa* and the marks, and it would not do to ignore it. *Pace* Rhys Davids's astonishing disregard for the many passages where the term *mahāpurisa* is in fact used in direct connection with the marks,[699] however, there are also a large number of places (certainly exceeding the number of "ethical" passages) in which the term is used in direct association with the marks; and, as we shall see below, the little independent evidence we have on such questions suggests that the "ethical" ideas did not necessarily predate this physical interpretation of the *mahāpurisa,* and indeed, that doctrinal development might even have taken the reverse course. We therefore now turn to the study of the marks proper, in passages that often consider them in direct connection with the notion of *mahāpurisa*.

3.1.3 Various physiognomic signs of the Buddha's status as a special being

It is the exception, rather than the rule, for canonical texts to declare that the Buddha has the marks of the *mahāpurisa* and give the full list, although texts that do so have understandably been the main focus of studies to date that were interested in examining this doctrine in its classical form, and less concerned with historical questions.

[699] Even making allowances for the differences between the conditions of scholarship conducted with the kinds of electronic search tools now available and those of Rhys Davids's time, it is almost impossible to believe that he was not wilfully ignoring e.g. an instance of the compound *dvattiṃsamahāpurisalakkhaṇāni* in DN 3, that is, elsewhere in the very same Nikāya he here translates and comments upon.

Some texts give only a subset of the marks, variously in association with the explicit statement that there are thirty-two marks overall, or not. We will look first at texts where some marks feature without any assertion that there are thirty-two marks in all.

SuN 3.11, tells the story of Asita, the seer who is sometimes fabled to have made the prophecy of the Buddha's future greatness. Here, in fact, however, it is the seer Kaṇhasiri who, "having taken hold of the bull among the Sakyans, longing[ly], being one who had completely mastered marks and mantras, with believing mind . . . raised his voice: 'This one, unsurpassed, is supreme among two-legged [men]'."[700] This text is of interest for a number of deviations from the standard "prophecy by marks" version of these events that was stabilised in the later biographies of the Buddha. First, the possibility of the young prince becoming a wheel-turning king is not mentioned. Second, as just noted, the prophecy is given by a different figure. Third, however, and of most interest for our purposes here, the prophecy is made not on the basis of a list of standard marks, but primarily on a vague resemblance between the prince and gold, which is reminiscent of the mark of golden complexion, but certainly stops short of being articulated in any form that can be unequivocally identified with that mark.[701]

Another possible relation of the mark of golden complexion is found in a passage in the *Mahāparinibbāna-sutta* DN 16, where Ānanda marvels that the Lord's skin is "brighter than the golden robes in which it is clothed", and the Buddha explains that the Tathāgata's skin is

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[700] Norman 90.

[701] "Then to the one called Asita the Sakyans showed the child, the young prince, [who was] like burnished gold burnished by a very skilful [smith] in the very mouth of the furnace, resplendent with glory, with perfect colour./ Having seen the young prince blazing like fire, purified like the lord of stars going in the sky, like the gleaming sun released from clouds in autumn . . . . The seer called Kaṇhasiri, with matted locks, having seen [him] like a golden ornament on a pale red blanket . . ." etc., Norman 90.

especially clear and bright on the two occasions of his supreme awakening and his final passing.[702]

Strong associations of effulgence and gold also feature in the description that gives, to my knowledge, the fullest set of marks not associated with the idea that there are thirty-two in all. MN 92, the *Sela-sutta* includes verses[703] that give an only partial and variant list of the marks: the Buddha is said to be "perfect in body, well favoured,/ Well fashioned and lovely to behold;" golden [in] colour, with white teeth, and strong; to have clear eyes, bright countenance, and erect carriage; he is "majestic"; he shines "like the blazing sun", and his skin is golden in sheen. The text further states that "The features are seen one and all/ That distinguish a man as well born;/ They are all to be found on your body,/ These marks that reveal a Great Man."[704] It is possible, of course, that the list is partial as a concession to the rigours and poetic licence of the verse form, and we should note that the same text elsewhere says that there are indeed thirty-two marks, but without actually listing them.

In all these "partial" descriptions of marks ("partial", that is, from the perspective of the "full" list of thirty-two, which of course does not necessarily have normative force in all periods and corners of the tradition), it is notable that gold and radiance play a central role. In MN 92/SuN 3.7, this is further associated with general, naturalistic signs of health and attractiveness: teeth, bearing and eyes. There are notably none of the more cryptic and seemingly allegorical signs

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[702] Walshe 260.

[703] MN 92 is repeated at SuN 3.7. The same verses also feature in ThaG 818-841.

[704] Ñāṇamoli 758-759: *paripuṇṇakāyo suruci sujāto cārudassano/ suvaṇṇavaṇṇosi bhagavā susukkadāṭhosi viriyavā/ narassa hi sujātassa ye bhavanti viyañjanā/ sabbe te tava kāyasmiṃ mahāpurisalakkhaṇā/ pasannanetto sumukho brahā uju patāpavā/ majjhe samaṇasaṅghassa ādiccova virocasi/ kalyāṇadassano bhikkhu kañcanasannibhattaco/ kinte samaṇabhāvena evaṃ uttamavaṇṇino/ rājā arahasi bhavituṃ cakkavattī rathesabho/ cāturanto vijitāvī jambusaṇḍassa issaro/ khattiyā bhogi rājāno anuyuttā bhavantu te.*

found in the "full" list of thirty-two: no association with lions, cows, or antelope; no webbed fingers; no sheathed genitals; and so on.

Indeed, only two of these more *recherché* marks make any independent appearance, and each, to my knowledge, only once. AN 4.4.36, *Loke-sutta,* tells the story of the Brāhmin Doṇa,[705] who is journeying when he sees the mark of the thousand-spoked wheel on the footprints of the Bhagavan.[706] Doṇa proceeds to interrogate the Buddha as to the kind of marvellous being he is destined to become, and the Buddha denies all the standard options (*deva, gandharva, yakkha,* human being) and to say that he is merely a Buddha, *sui generis.*[707] Similarly, the "antelope calves" feature in a brief pair of verses at SN 1.30, in which "the slender hero with antelope calves" serves as an epithet for the Buddha.[708]

These are all the passages I was able to find in which subsets of the marks are mentioned without any mention of the idea that they belong to a full list of thirty-two. We also find, however, two related subsets which are singled out for special attention in contexts that do also feature the idea that the marks are thirty-two in number. In one instance, three of the marks feature together, but not in application to the Buddha. SuN 5.1 ascribes the sheathed genitals, the *ūrṇa* or tuft between the eyes, and the very large tongue to Bāvari.[709] This is of interest both for the ascription of the marks to persons other than the Buddha, and also for the

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[705] Presumably the same as features in AN 5.20.192, Woodward and Hare III, 163 ff.

[706] Woodward and Hare II, 43: *addasā kho doṇo brāhmaṇo bhagavato pādesu cakkāni sahassārāni sanemikāni sanābhikāni sabbākāraparipūrāni.* There appears to be no other instance of this exact wording in the canon.

[707] Woodward and Hare II, 44-45.

[708] Bodhi 104: *eṇijaṅghaṃ kisaṃ vīraṃ.* This epithet appears to be unique to this passage.

[709] SuN v. 1022, Norman 130.

association of these three marks as a specially selected set. This passage occurs in a text that also features explicit mention of the Buddha being characterised by thirty-two marks, and also the assertion that they have been transmitted in Brāhmanical lore, and that the bearer of them will have one of two destinies, wheel-turning king or world-saviour.

Two of these same marks are further specifically singled out for special treatments elsewhere, this time in connection with the Buddha, and once more in connection with explicit mentions of the fact that they belong to an overall set of thirty-two marks. The state of the Buddha's genitals is indeed mysterious, but whatever is actually meant by the formula usually translated as "genitals encased in a sheath" (which Lamotte, in an access of clinical precision, calls "cryptorchidie"[710]), this mark and the mark of the excessively large tongue,[711] were the focus of a tale attested in multiple locations[712] in which the Buddha is represented showing those marks to sceptical Brahmans etc. in order to satisfy them that he does indeed possess *all* the thirty-two marks. In such tales, the other thirty marks can be readily seen (though as Lopez points out, it is not clear how marks like "acute sense of taste" could be seen![713]), but doubt remains as to these two.[714] The Buddha achieves the demonstration of the wondrous state of his genitalia

[710] OED defines this term merely by citing the following: 1874 *Van Buren's Dis. Genit. Org.* 390 A cryptorchid is an individual whose scrotum contains no testicles. 1882 *Syd. Soc. Lex.*, *Cryptorchidism*, the condition of a *Cryptorchis. Cryptorchis*, term for one whose testicles have not descended into the scrotum, but remain in the abdomen.

[711] A Freudian could doubtless go to town with this juxtaposition.

[712] The story of this feat is related in various forms in DN 3 (twice), Walshe 122, 123; MN 91 (twice), Ñāṇamoli 774-775, 750-751; and SuN 3.7/MN 92, Norman 73, Ñāṇamoli 758. For more on MN 91 see immediately below. See Lamotte, MPPŚ 275-276, n 1, for Chinese Āgama parallels.

[713] Lopez 20.

[714] *dvīsu mahāpurisalakkhaṇesu kaṅkhati vicikicchati nādhimuccati na sampasīdati kosohite ca vatthaguyhe pahūtajivhatāya ca.*

by some feat of magical power.[715] He then shows the size of his tongue by extruding it to touch both ear holes and nostrils, and to cover his entire forehead.[716]

This brings us to the "full" or "classic" list of thirty-two marks.

The first thing we should note is that, in the context of the large number of passages we have surveyed thus far, there are only a few passages that actually present the doctrine of the *mahāpurisa* and his marks in this "classic" form. A slightly greater number of texts merely state explicitly that the Buddha bears the "thirty-two marks of a Great Man", without listing them; this could, of course, indicate that such texts were composed in a *milieu* in which the full list was known and assumed. This is true in DN 3, the *Ambaṭṭha-sutta,* DN 4, the *Soṇadaṇḍa-sutta,* and DN 5, *Kūṭadanta-sutta,*[717] and also in MN 95, *Cankī-sutta.*[718] It should be noted that the simple mention of the thirty-two marks, without listing them, is often given in the context of the pericope that states that the bearer of them will either become a wheel-turning king (listing

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[715] *atha kho bhagava tathārūpaṃ iddhābhisaṅkhāraṃ abhisaṅkhāsi. yathā addasa uttaro māṇavo bhagavato kosohitaṃ vatthaguyhaṃ.* In a rare case of Homer nodding, Lamotte seems to think that *tathārūpaṃ* means the Buddha actually elaborates a magical duplicate of himself ("le Bhagavat crée à son image un fantôme magique", 276 n. 1), and gets tied in knots trying to decide whether it might not be better to follow MPPŚ and think the Buddha made an image rather of a stallion etc., than to think the Buddha susceptible of such indecorum. *Tathārūpam iddhābhisaṅkhāraṃ abhisaṅkhāsi* is a regular formula for all kinds of feats of supernatural power, however, as at MN 49, Ñāṇamoli 428, where the Buddha makes it possible for Brahmā and his assembly to hear but not see him; SN 22.80, Bodhi 919, where the Buddha makes the monks approach him by ones and twos by the same kind of power; etc. Lamotte notes that in MPPŚ itself, the Buddha is said to show an elephant or a stallion, whereon he says, "My sexual organ is like that."

[716] *atha kho bhagavā jivhaṃ ninnāmetvā ubhopi kaṇṇasotāni anumasi parimasi. ubhopi nāsikāsotāni anumasi parimasi. kevalampi lalāṭamaṇḍalaṃ jivhāya chādesi.*

[717] *samaṇo khalu bho gotamo dvattiṃsamahāpurisalakkhaṇehi samannāgato*; Walshe 122, 127, 134. Note that this means that Pande is wrong, 87, when he states that DN 4 and 5 do not mention the number thirty-two; explicit mention of the number of the marks is found, as Walshe's translation indicates, at PTS I, 116 (DN 4) and 132 (DN 5). As we have just seen, DN 3 explicitly names the marks of the genitalia and the tongue.

[718] Ñāṇamoli 777.

the seven jewels of such a king) or a Buddha; Burnouf already noticed that this pericope must be old, since it is found in both the Pāli and Sanskritic traditions.[719]

In three texts only, finally, the full list of thirty-two marks is actually enumerated. We will now examine each of these texts briefly in turn.

The first such text is DN 14, the *Mahâpadāna-sutta*,[720] which famously relates the career of the former Buddha Vipassī and also presents the doctrine that he was one of six prior Buddhas; in this text, we find many of the elements of the eventually standard boilerplate biography of the generic Buddha, In this context, the marks are in fact ascribed to the former Buddha Vipassī, and not to Śākyamuni, as part of his conformity to the "nature of things" (*dhammatā*) as pertains to the career of a Buddha. Vipassī is said to possess the marks, and they are also listed;[721] seers come and identify him as either a future wheel-turning king or world-saviour on the basis of these marks.

MN 91, the *Brahmāyu-sutta,* also gives the full list of the marks, but in a different connection. Here, the list is inserted into one of the variants of the story that has various doubtful Brāhmins come to satisfy themselves that the Buddha is indeed possessed of the marks, already mentioned above. In this case, a student called Uttara goes at the behest of his master Brahmāyu to conduct this test, and is satisfied by what he sees, by the Buddha's supernatural demonstration of the wondrous state of his genitalia, and by his head-licking proof of the size of his tongue. When Uttara returns to his master, he is made to give the full list of the thirty-

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[719] Burnouf 580-582.

[720] Corresponding to T1.005a-b.

[721] Walshe 205-206. The list of the marks is as given above p. 295.

two marks in the process of assuring him that the Buddha indeed possesses them all. This is then followed by a painstaking description of Gotama's personal comportment, which serves as further evidence of his exalted state.[722] The text concludes with Brahmāyu converting to the Buddha's teachings, serving him personally, dying and attaining a good rebirth from which it is prophesied he will directly attain liberation.[723]

This brings us, finally, to DN 30, the *Lakkhana-sutta* or "Discourse on the Marks",[724] which is a text entirely dedicated to the concept of the thirty-two marks. This text, similarly, lists the marks, but then, uniquely, goes on to explain how it is that they are all attained. Its basic doctrine is that each of the marks, or in some cases a small plural subset of the marks, is the result of the meritorious deeds of the Tathāgata in his former existences. In each case, we are also informed of benefits that derive from these meritorious deeds (apart from the marks) for the Buddha, both in former existences as a ruler, and in his final existence as a Buddha. The exposition of the specific merit that results in the acquisition of each mark is followed by a set of verses recapitulating it. Without going into detail, which would lead us into the analysis of individual marks that I have deliberately eschewed here, suffice it to say that the marks are generally understood in this text to be the signs of the fact that the Buddha, as a *bodhisattva,* has already been a paragon in all respects for countless incarnations; the overall portrait of the Buddha that emerges is that of a being constantly and greatly concerned for the welfare of all, who has been a source of immense blessings for countless beings since time immemorial.

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[722] Ñāṇamoli 746-749. Reminiscent of *Analects* X.

[723] Ñāṇamoli 753-754.

[724] Walshe 441-460.

We thus see that DN 30 contains in embryo the key feature that were to characterise discourse about the marks in the post-Pāli canonical era: a complex allegorical reading of each mark, interpreted in terms of a vast economy of merit that centres around the Buddha as a kind of world-saviour. I must emphasise once more, since this doctrine seems so normal in the retrospective view from subsequent developments, that it is only found replete with all these elements in this single text. It is tempting, therefore, to regard DN 30 as the culmination of a complex process of development and therefore as the latest of the materials we have surveyed here, but to do so would be to jump the gun. We therefore now turn to an examination of the information available about the relative dates of these various materials on the *mahāpurisa* and his marks, before essaying some general comments on the significant of these materials for the larger history of doctrines of embodiment in general.

3.1.4 Dates

As with the materials relating to ideas datable to the earlier part of the Pāli-canonical period treated in Chapter 2 of this dissertation, so, too, with the materials in this chapter, I have relegated consideration of the complex evidence bearing upon problems of dating to the relevant Appendix (Appendix 1). Here I will merely summarise as briefly as I can the conclusions of the pertinent portion of that Appendix (Appendix 1.5). Readers interested in my detailed reasons for adopting these judgements about dates are referred to the Appendix itself.

As I argue in more detail in the Appendix, there is some evidence that components of the complex of ideas about the *mahāpurisa* and his marks are relatively early. This evidence, however, is relatively weak and small in quantity. This is the reason that I have chosen, on the whole, to regard the ideas of the *mahāpurisa* and his marks as later, particularly in comparison to the ideas about ordinary given embodiment, *amata* and the *manomayakāya* treated in Chapter

2. Even if inklings of these ideas were present in germ quite early on, the quantitative distribution of our evidence would suggest that they only became important relatively late, and that important parts of the overall complex also only develop relatively late. This means that the centre of chronological gravity for these ideas is relatively late, and that for the purposes of our more general chronology of ideas about bodies, the complex as a whole should be treated as belonging to the later phase of Pāli-canonical Buddhism.

With these caveats in mind, the provisional conclusion of that analysis is that these ideas seem to have developed in three broad phases.

In the earliest phase, Buddhist texts already understand that non-Buddhists practise various ill-defined physiognomic marks, and we also see some inklings of the notion that the Buddha's exceptional spiritual status is reflected in unspecified exceptional features of his physical body.

In a middle phase, we see the emergence of more specific, idiosyncratic notions of the nature of the Buddha's special marks, including the marks of the tongue, genitals and *urṇa*. Perhaps around the same time we also see the development of the idea that the marks are thirty-two in number, that the knowledge of these thirty-two marks is part of Brahminical lore, and that the Buddha had precisely these marks. We should probably ascribe to roughly the same middle period the tradition that the Buddha verified his possession of the marks for sceptical Brahmans. Finally, the earliest few inklings of the "ethical" interpretation of the concept of *mahāpurisa* also seem traceable to this period.

We only see attested in relatively late materials the ideas that the marks are governed by a logic of merit, and the ascription of the Buddha's marks to his acts in prior lives as a *bodhisattva*.

The full itemised list of thirty-two marks is also among materials only attested relatively late. Finally, the bulk of the "ethical" materials also cannot, to my knowledge, be shown to be earlier than this phase.

These arguments about the dates of our materials have two notable implications. First, there are no grounds independent of hypothetical speculations about doctrinal development to think that the "ethical" ideal of the *mahāpurisa* is earliest. If anything, the evidence seems to suggest the opposite, that is, that it was initially a marginal reinterpretation of earlier ideas, and only intrudes somewhat later into our materials. Second, the only evidence that the lore of marks is originally non-Buddhist is found in overt Buddhist assertions to that effect. The outline of development of these ideas does not preclude the possibility that this assertion is justified, but it is also noteworthy that the details of ideas ascribed to Brahmans seems to develop in tandem alongside properly Buddhist ideas over time, and that the application of these ideas to the Buddha is as old in germ as any ascription of those ideas to non-Buddhist groups. The pattern of the evidence therefore does not necessarily reflect the existence of a developed pre-existing non-Buddhist doctrine that is gradually appropriated and applied to Buddhist ends. It is rather equally possible that the important ideas were almost entirely of Buddhist provenance.

3.1.5 Conclusion: The body of marks as the earliest special body of the Buddha

We saw above that "ethical" ideas of the *mahāpurisa* do not seem to represent the bulk of doctrine about the *mahāpurisa.* Whether or not "ethical" models were in fact marginal to Buddhist ideas in the Pāli-canonical period, however, they are in any case marginal to our concerns here. They only bear on the problem of embodiment insofar as they threaten to throw a red herring across our path as we seek to examine corporeal ideas about the *mahāpurisa* and his marks.

Especially in the context of this study of ideas of embodiment in Buddhism, the most significant feature of this set of ideas about the *mahāpurisa* and his marks is that it represents the earliest place we can locate in the tradition where the Buddha is envisaged as having a positive, special form of embodiment to match his spiritual status. For the sake of completeness, we must note that the single instance where SuN 5.1 ascribes the marks of the genitals, tongue and *urṇa* to Bāvari shows that the early tradition did not uniformly ascribe all aspects of this special embodiment to the Buddha alone. On the whole, however, it seems that a coherent tradition took shape relatively early on that understood the Buddha as the *mahāpurisa par excellence;* that held that a *mahāpurisa* was identifiable by physical marks on the body; that soon standardised the number and itemisation of these marks; that identified the physiognomic basis of the doctrine as a preserve of Brāhman learning, for whatever reason; and that held that the Buddha, as a bearer of such marks, was destined to be either *cakravartirāja* or world saviour. Many or all these various elements were coordinated in narratives of a birth prophecy about the Buddha given by a non-Buddhist ascetic, and of the verification of the Buddha's status to initially sceptical Brāhmin witnesses. In other words, in its fully-fledged form (even without needing to include the doctrine that the marks are fruits of merit from prior lives), the doctrine holds that the marks are the special preserve of the (or a) Buddha, and the doctrine of the Buddha as *mahāpurisa* and "marked" as such is a kind of corporeal Buddhalogy.

There is a marked contrast here with the general negative or ineffabilist tendency towards *dis*-embodiment as the corporeal corollary of the Buddhist ideal, which I identified as the dominant theme in a range of materials from the inception of the tradition in Chapter 2 of this dissertation. Those materials held, in various ways, that embodiment *per se,* as a kind of being-in-the-world, is a bad thing, and the religious ideal is to undo or transcend it. By contrast, here

we have a set of ideas that rather admits that there exist special forms of embodiment that can more or less adequately embody the special quality of a being who has attained (or is to attain) to the religious ideal. This is obviously a watershed moment for the history of ideas of embodiment in Buddhism, since it is only with the invention of this doctrine that the very idea of an ideal embodiment *per se* enters onto the scene.

It is notable, in this connection, that we seem to be able to trace the idea of such an adequate, ideal embodiment so early in the tradition – at the latest, as we have seen, to a vague "middle" phase of the Pāli-canonical period, with certain germs of the constituent ideas perhaps present quite early on indeed. If not from the very inception of the tradition, then at least from very soon thereafter, we already find the field of ideas about embodiment ranging between two contrary poles in regard to the possibility of embodying the religious ideal. On the one hand, we have the rich variety of ideas examined in Chapter 2, which I argued all ultimately tend towards a rejection of embodiment *per se* as a corollary of the religious ideal. On the other hand, however, beginning with these materials on the *mahāpurisa* and his marks, we have the inconspicuous beginnings of a contrary conception. Here, the attainment of the religious ideal entails a transformation of the body, or the acquisition of a special kind of body, so that the body of the Buddha (and like beings, such as there are) is understood to be exempt from the usual failings to which ordinary given bodies are heir. This countervailing effabilist tendency to imagine ideal embodiments, rather than to reject embodiment altogether, may begin as the mere trickle we have been tracing in this section, but it was eventually to become a flood.

I must emphasise the differences between the interpretation of Pāli-canonical materials about the marks that I am urging here and the ways this material has been presented in scholarship to date. Eventually, of course, the marks were to be woven into *trikāya* doctrine as a prominent

feature of the *sāṃbhogikakāya*, though it is not my intention to try and trace here all the vicissitudes undergone by marks doctrine in the intervening centuries. The tendency to consider the history of ideas about bodies in Buddhism only through the anachronistic and teleological distorting lens of *trikāya* doctrine, however, has meant that secondary scholarship to date has considered the doctrine of the marks *only* as such a curious and ancillary feature of this particular body or its putative forerunners. The teleological perspective has blinkered observers entirely to the more basic role I am here assigning to the body of marks in doctrinal history, as the distant forerunner of all eventual notions of ideal embodiments *per se.*

From the other end of doctrinal history, scholars of early or Pāli Buddhism have colluded in this neglect by falling into the doctrinaire assumption that "ethical" ideas of the *mahāpurisa* must be more authentic, typical, and orthodox, and relegating the corporeal understanding of the marks to the status of a demotic sideshow. Against these understandings, which both equally miss the point of the body of marks in its original contexts, I contend that the doctrine of this body can only be properly understood when seen in the wider frame of other ideas about embodiments. Conversely, the history of ideas about embodiments is distorted if we do not include in it this important chapter in the development of ideas about ideal bodies.

Indeed, I would suggest that when we locate ideas about the body of marks in the larger history of ideas about embodiments in general, an additional perspective becomes available, which renders even more implausible doctrinaire claims that "ethical" ideas of the *mahāpurisa* are somehow normative or orthodox. When we see the body of marks as part of a larger field of ideas about the relation between embodiments and the religious ideal, we can account for the development of the doctrine of the body of marks in part by appealing to a developmental logic

running through doctrinal history.[725] Before embarking on this speculative analysis, we must recall once again here that the evidence we were able to marshal for questions of dating in these materials was relatively meagre. This speculative reconstruction of the logic of doctrinal development upon its basis is, if anything, even more tentative than the bare chronology, since it adds to the uncertainties of dating further opportunities for error in its speculations. I advance these speculations not so much because I am convinced they are certainly right, but in part in the hope that I can at least show that there are plausible alternatives that can be offered to those accounts in prior scholarship that I have characterised as "doctrinaire".

In a hypothetical conceptual ecology where all the available ideas about embodiment are negative, there is an obvious open niche for ideas of positive embodiment, and it seems only too likely that it will eventually be filled by some theory that holds out the possibility of a positive embodiment of the ideal. This is even more the case when we consider given how fundamental a condition embodiment is to worldly existence (i.e. to all the existence any ordinary beings know). Even if there may have been a very early phase of Buddhist doctrinal history in which no such positive ideas about embodiment of the ideal yet existed, therefore, it seems plausible that there would have existed pressures and opportunities for such ideas to develop.

In this light, I suggest that it is plausible to regard *mahāpurisa* doctrine as probably beginning in a response to this pressure. It is therefore more likely that the corporeal notion of a body of marks was the dominant initial theme in the idea of *mahāpurisa,* as the preponderance of textual witnesses and evidence about dating suggests. On this explanation, the explanatory role played by appeals to non-Buddhist precedents and/or "popular" ideas is rather filled by

[725] See §6.3.2 for a more detailed description of what I mean by "developmental logic" here.

the larger context of the overall spectrum of ideas about embodiment, and the basic problematics of embodiment that underlie them. That is to say, I suggest that it is more plausible to imagine an "ethical" reinterpretation of an originally corporeal notion, where the corporeal notion is explained by this overall developmental logic, than to imagine that an originally ethical notion for some reason became attached to a corporeal interpretation. We can then see the body of marks in its proper light, as an integral part of the overall landscape of ideas about possibilities of embodiment in the Pāli-canonical materials.[726]

If this is the case, of course, it means that the usual understanding of the relation between corporeal and "ethical" conceptions of the *mahāpurisa* is turned on its head. The various, apparently *ad hoc* "ethical" understandings we surveyed above would be read as evidence of a scattered and probably relatively marginal tendency to appropriate an originally *corporeal* notion and reinterpret it in terms of more purist spiritual ideals. I would argue that it would make perfect sense if we saw such moves being made by proponents of a negative vision of embodiment *per se,* who would certainly want to recuperate any ground they might have lost to their "corporealist" opponents.[727]

Once again, however, I reiterate that I consider these arguments somewhat speculative. Retreating for the moment, then, from these more speculative suggestions about the logic of doctrinal development, I would like to conclude this section by reiterating those conclusions

[726] This interpretation has the added virtue of conceiving of the body of marks as a doctrine with the same claims to "authenticity" and "orthodoxy" as perhaps better-known rejections of the body. It thereby conceives of the Pāli-canonical tradition as a whole as a complex ecology of debate and conceptual tensions, rather than as a two-dimensional caricatured creature of doxographical or apologetic fantasy.

[727] Indeed, if this reading is correct, we see here the first instance of a theme that continues through the later history of ideas about embodiment: the appropriation of imagery and language of the body for the advocacy of anti-corporeal ideals.

about the Buddha as a *mahāpurisa* and his body of marks that I think have been shown here to be relatively immune from doubt, which we can therefore carry away as conservative and safe conclusions for the purposes of our larger narrative.

First, it is clear that by a "middle" phase of Pāli-canonical Buddhism, at the latest, a corporeal doctrine of the *mahāpurisa* and his marks existed in fairly fully-fledged form (whether or not an "ethical" doctrine existed in parallel or even preceded it). In contrast to the early Buddhist ideas about embodiment examined in Chapter 2, this doctrine of a body of marks presents a positive conception of the possibility of the embodiment of the religious ideal, and the still relatively early date of these materials makes it the earliest such positive doctrine of a special embodiment for the Buddha that we can identify. This gives the body of marks great significance for the history of ideas of embodiment as a whole, a significance that prior scholarship has overlooked. Following the advent of this idea, the overall landscape of ideas about embodiment was to be configured as a range between two basic poles: a negative pole that saw disembodiment, in one form or another, as the only corporeal corollary of religious attainment, on the one hand; and a positive pole that imagined various special embodiments for the Buddha and like beings, in various degrees of exaltation and power, on the other.

The marks *per se* were eventually to be subsumed into the *trikāya* notion of *sāṃbhogikakāya;* but the general notion of positive special embodiments, whose advent the body of marks heralded, was to burgeon into a much richer and more diverse range of doctrines. For the moment, however, we must recognise that the "body of marks", as I have been calling it here, fell short of the status of a true "Buddha-body" in three respects. First, though I have been speaking for convenience here of a "body of marks", there is no indication in the texts themselves that the body characterised by these marks was thereby marked out as a special *kind of* body; so far as

we can tell, the Buddha's body was so far a body like those of other sentient beings, but with special features. Second, it is most strictly speaking a characteristic not of the Buddha as such, that is to say, of the Buddha in the status he acquired in virtue of his awakening, but rather, of the *bodhisattva* who was to *become* the Buddha. This is so in part because the marks are acquired as the result the merit of prodigious acts of virtue over the many lifetimes of the *bodhisattva;* it is also so because the marks are already present on the body of the *bodhisattva,* in many accounts, prior to his actual enlightenment. Third, the "body of marks" has no special function, and indeed, it seems, may well not even continue to exist, after the final *parinirvāṇa* of the Buddha, or in any other way separate to his final earthly existence (in other realms or worlds, for instance), and therefore it fails to fulfil one of the key functions that we will see characterise other, true "Buddha-bodies" – that they extend or prolong the living presence of the Buddha into times and parts of the cosmos where he would otherwise not reach, and thus increase his salivific availability to sentient beings who otherwise would languish in a Buddhaless world.

In the next section of this chapter, I turn to the negative arm of my argument that this was the earliest and most significant positive doctrine of special embodiment in the Pāli canon: reasons that I do not believe that the Pāli-canonical material teaches the *dharmakāya/dhammakāya,* or any of the other special *kāya* that were later to be attributed to the Buddha, and which previous scholars have occasionally thought to find in the canonical materials.

Chapter 3.2 Pāli-canonical antecedents to the notion of the *dharmakāya*

I argued in my "Introduction"[728] to this dissertation that in its attempts to consider the history of ideas about embodiments of the Buddha to date, the field of Buddhist Studies has been blinkered by terminology, on the one hand, and by an excessive focus on the bodies of the Buddha to the exclusion of the bodies of other beings, and especially ordinary beings, on the other. Thus, in trying to examine the provenance of the various *kāya* of the Buddha, secondary scholars have first been interested only in bodies of the Buddha, and second been interested even in such bodies only if they are identified by the term *kāya.* This has led, more narrowly, to the neglect of the relics of the Buddha*,* which are called "bodies" (*śarīra*) but not *kāya;* and, more broadly, to the neglect of the understanding of ordinary embodiment to which ordinary beings are heir, a problematic which, however, I contend forms an essential part of the background for ideas about all the bodies of the Buddha and the characteristics that make them special.

My insistence upon broadening our purview to include consideration of ordinary embodiments and also of the relics has meant that little of the material covered thus far in this dissertation has been material considered in the context of previous, narrower studies of the Buddha's bodies, with the partial exception of some ideas about the *manomayakāya* and the body of the thirty-two marks, both of which are rightly considered to have some indirect role as antecedents of aspects of later body doctrines. In this section of this dissertation, however, we finally find ourselves addressing for the first time material that has been usually been considered squarely part of the history of *buddhakāya* doctrine: the small body of materials in the Pāli canon that has been held, both by traditional commentators and by secondary scholars,

[728] See p. 13 and §1.3.4.

to constitute the scriptural warrant or origins of the later notion of the *dharmakāya* or "Dharma body" of the Buddha.

As we shall see, however, there is startlingly little material in the Pāli canon that does in fact foreshadow the later doctrine of the *dharmakāya;* there is, as has often been noted, in fact only one single instance of the actual term *dhammakāya* in the entire canon,[729] and that its interpretation, further, is by no means simple nor assuredly contiguous with much of what the term later came to mean. I will argue below that some of the little material that can be found in the Pāli canon foreshadowing the concept of the *dharmakāya* (almost all of which has long ago been identified and presented by previous scholars of the subject) has consistently been actively construed in the service of later agendas by the tradition, and that, largely following the tradition, it has also been misconstrued in its historical significance to varying degrees by secondary scholars.[730] I will argue that we should not be surprised that later writers in the tradition thus appropriated the material we will study here to the service of their later conceptual schemes and doctrines, but that, as religious and intellectual historians attempting to trace the course of development of Buddhist ideas, we are negligent when we allow ourselves to facilely follow these interested statements of the later tradition in our attempts to

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[729] See e.g. Harrison, "Real Phantom Body" 50; Demiéville, "Busshin" 176.

[730] To give a single example of the wide and unquestioned circulation of mistaken generalisations based upon the distortion of the significance of these materials, the article "Buddha" in Eliade's *Encyclopedia of Religion* by Frank E. Reynolds and Charles Hallisey states, as part of its treatment of ideas about bodies as a "language" in terms of which "Buddhahood has traditionally been conceived and described", that "in the early Buddhist literature (e.g., [*sic*] *Dīgha Nikāya,* vol. 3, p. 84) the Buddha is described as having a body [*sic*] 'born of *dharma*' [*sic*], that is, a *dharmakāya*;" 330. The passage referred to is in fact the *only* place in the Pāli canon where the Buddha is said to be *dhammakāya* (see below, §3.2.1), despite the misleading impression implied by the presentation of it as an *example* of such a doctrine ("e.g."). This is quite apart from two other serious errors in this sentence, which combine to produce a very misleading impression: (1) *dhammakāya* here being used as a *bahuvrīhi,* the Buddha does not "have *a* body of *dhamma*", but rather has *dhamma* for his body; (2) the phrase "born of *dhamma*" in the text does not gloss *dhammakāya,* but is rather presented as a claim anyone with firm faith *in* the Tathāgata can make about himself. We in fact have very little idea *what* the word *dhammakāya* means in this text, as I will show below.

reconstruct the configuration and meaning of the earlier materials. In short, just because the later tradition identifies the passages we will study as the canonical warrant for the idea of the *dharmakāya* does not mean (a) that they are actually where the concept of *dharmakāya* comes from, nor (b) that we should believe them that the passages are in fact primarily talking about *dharmakāya,* as we later understand it, in the first place.

In what follows, then, we will examine the passages in question by turn, considering the significance of each passage for the development of the concept of *dharmakāya* and for Buddhist doctrines of embodiment at large.

3.2.1 The sole instance of the term *dhammakāya* in the Pāli canon: A false precedent to later notions of the *dharmakāya*

As noted above, the term *dhammakāya* only occurs once in the Pāli canon. Much therefore hinges on the meaning of the term in this passage, and the extent to which it can be considered a genuine prolepsis of later developments. It is thus worth examining the passage in detail.

The passage in question occurs in DN 27, the *Aggañña-sutta.* The Buddha preaches this discourse to two prospective monks of Brahmin background about the criticisms they encounter from their fellow Brahmins for having gone forth into homelessness among "shaveling petty ascetics, servants, dark fellows born of Brahmā's foot";[731] he portrays these Brahmins as saying, in their pride about their own purity and elect status, that they are

> " . . . true children of Brahmā, born from his mouth, born of Brahmā, created by Brahmā, heirs of Brahmā" (*brahmuno puttā orasā mukhato jātā brahmajā brahmanimmitā brahmadāyādā*).[732]

[731] Walshe 407.

[732] Walshe 407.

The bulk of the text comprises a polemic against these views, designed to show that the highest group to which one can belong is not in fact the Brahmin or any other caste, but the community of monks following the Buddha's teachings.

To this end, the text has the Buddha first point out that Brahmins are born of woman like anyone else, not born of Brahman or his mouth. He then points out further that members of any caste can be good or evil, and that we find good and evil among all castes. On the basis of this second point in particular, he argues for the replacement of the Brahmin by the monk or Arahant as the noblest idea, in virtue of his conformity with Dhamma, which thereby replaces Brahman as the benchmark of supreme value:

> "Now, since both dark and bright qualities, which are blamed and praised by the wise, are scattered indiscriminately among the four castes, the wise do not recognise the claim about the Brahmin caste being the highest. What is that? Because, Vāseṭṭha, anyone from the four castes who becomes a monk, an Arahant who has destroyed the corruptions, who has lived the life, who has laid down the burden, reached the highest goal, destroyed the fetter of becoming, and become emancipated through super-knowledge – he is proclaimed supreme (*aggam*) by virtue of Dhamma and not non-Dhamma."[733]

Indeed, so overwhelming is the superiority of Dhamma to any worldly value that even King Pasenadi of Kosala acknowledges himself Gotama's inferior and "does humble service" etc. to him.[734]

This brings us to the key passage at issue, in which the term *dhammakāya* occurs. In a clear move to appropriate the rhetoric of the offending Brahmins and modify it to show the superiority of the Buddha and his Dhamma, the text continues:

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[733] Walshe 408.

[734] Walshe 409.

> "Vāseṭṭha, all of you, though of different birth, name, clan and family, who have gone forth from the household life into homelessness, if you are asked who you are, should reply: 'We are ascetics, followers of the Sakyan.' He whose faith in the Tathāgata is settled, rooted, established, solid, unshakeable by any ascetic or Brahmin, any deva or māra or Brahmā or anyone in the world, can truly say: 'I am a true son of [the] Blessed Lord, born of his mouth,[735] born of Dhamma, created by Dhamma, an heir of Dhamma (*bhagavato'mhi putto oraso mukhato jāto dhammajo dhammanimmito dhammadāyāda*).' Why is that? Because, Vāseṭṭha, this designates the Tathāgata: 'The Body of Dhamma' (*dhammakāyo*), that is, 'The Body of Brahmā', or 'Become Dhamma' (*dhammabhuto*[736]), that is 'Become Brahmā'."[737]

The text then supports its general point that those who follow the Buddha and his Dhamma are superior to any worldly station or its attendant values by means of an elaborate cosmogonic myth,[738] but for our purposes, this much will suffice to assess the significance of the term *dhammakāya* and its introduction here.

The first thing we need to observe about this text, before we analyse its content for what it can tell us about the concept of *dhammakāya,* is that it is most likely that it did not originally contain the notion of *dhammakāya* at all, as a comparison with the Chinese Āgama parallels

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[735] It is a mystery to me what Walshe does with the word *oraso,* which other translators translate (in conjunction with . . . *jāto*), seemingly correctly, "[born] of his breast". See also PTS *Dict.* s.v. *orasa.*

[736] Walshe's interpretation of this term may not be the most illuminating; see immediately below.

[737] Walshe 409. *yassa kho panassa vāseṭṭhā, tathāgate saddhā niviṭṭhā mūlajātā patiṭṭhitā daḷhā asaṃhāriyā4 samaṇena vā brāhmaṇena vā devena vā mārena vā brahmunā vā kenaci vā lokasmiṃ, tassetaṃ kallaṃ vacanāya: bhagavato'mhi putto oraso mukhato jāto dhammajo dhammanimmito dhammadāyādo'ti. taṃ kissa hetu. tathāgatassa hetaṃ vāseṭṭhā, adhivacanaṃ dhammakāyo itipi, brahmakāyo itipi, dhammabhuto iti pi, brahmabhuto iti pi.*

[738] This cosmogonic-cum-aetiological narrative is clearly designed to support the valorisation of the Buddha and his Dhamma by presenting first the origin of caste, and the further origin of asceticism as the most noble vocation of all. It first narrative portrays a long process of degradation and fall, driven by ever-burgeoning lust and greed, from a pristine golden state of purity, refinement and bliss that characterises beings at the beginning of a cosmic cycle. This process culminates in a dreadful state of lawlessness, and against this nadir, the gradual emergence of the castes is portrayed as "in accordance with Dhamma", that is, as a process by which men governed themselves and begin in some limited measure to restore order and right to their cosmos. In this context, however, asceticism is portrayed as a further rejection of the limitations that remain in the specific Dhamma (code of conduct and appropriate ethics) of each of these specific castes, and the one who completely realises the goal of the ascetic, "an Arahant who has destroyed the corruptions, done what had to be done . . . and become liberated by the highest insight" is said explicitly to be "chief among them in accordance with Dhamma". Walshe 409-415.

quickly shows. As Paul Harrison points out, following Demiéville, the parallel passages in the Chinese translations of this text, including the *Dīrghâgama,* do not include the term *dharmakāya;*[739] in point of fact, these texts do not include anything corresponding to the entire sentence in which *dhammakāya* appears in the Pāli version.[740] This fact has two main implications, one for the relative date of the concept of *dhammakāya* here, and one for its interpretation.

First, in terms of the relative chronology of Buddhist texts, it means that failing the remote possibility that the this sentence was somehow *eliminated* from other transmission lineages that also received it from a common Ur-text (which would go against our usual understanding of how the textual corpora have evolved), the term was most likely added to what has come down to us as the Pāli version of the text sometime after the diffraction into separate transmission lineages of the materials we have received as the various sectarian canons.[741] Since we know so

[739] Harrison, "Real Phantom Body" 79, n. 23; Demiéville, "Busshin" 176: " . . . le terme si charactéristique employé dans le Nikâya n'y reparaît pas."

[740] It seems, in fact, from examining materials found in the Chinese parallels that is also unique to them that if anything this point in the text functioned somehow as a kind of "active receptor node" that was the site of a good deal of doctrinal improvisation of various kinds. *Dīrghâgama*: "If anyone should ask you what caste or clan you are of, you should reply, 'I am a son of the Brahman clan;' you can also say of yourself, 'I am of the Brahman caste, born of his very mouth, born from the metamorphosis of Dharma; I have attained purity in the present, and will also be pure in the future.' Why? Because the great name of 'Brahman' is no less than a title (號; not 'surnom' as Demiéville would have it) of the Tathāgata; the Tathāgata is the eye of the world, and the Dharma is the wisdom of the world; he is the Dharma of the world[?], the Brahman of the world, the Dharma-wheel of the world, the ambrosia (*ganlu, *amṛta*) of the world, the Dharma-lord of the world"; 若有人問。汝誰種姓。當答彼言。我是沙門釋種子也。亦可自稱。我是婆羅門種。親從口生。從法化生。現得清淨。後亦清淨。所以者何。大梵名者即如來號。如來爲世間眼。法爲世間智。爲世間法。爲世間梵。爲世間法輪。爲世間甘露。爲世間法主, T1.37a29-b06. An alternate translation of this text, T10, states that a person who has steady faith in the Tathāgata will flourish, etc., "And why? Because all in the three *dhātu,* whether *śrāmaṇera,* Brahmin, *deva, māra* or Brahman, are my sons, and all alike participate in the same Dharma without distinction; they are born of the mouth of Dharma, and all alike belong to the 'caste' of Dharma; they are created of the metamorphoses of Dharma, and are sons of the True Dharma; 復次白衣。若人於我。安住正信。是人即得堅固增長。根本出生。不壞淨信。何以故。謂若沙門。若婆羅門。若天魔梵。三界一切。悉是我子。皆同一法。而無差別。正法口生。同一法種。從法所化。是真法子, T10.218a26-b01.

[741] See above p. 497 ff for my reasons for following Bareau against Schopen in this assumption, with the proviso that we cannot thereby be sure that the sectarian labels that eventually attached to those canons,

little about the actual details of how the various transmission lineages were separated, however, this gives us little information; it could mean that the "*dhammakāya* sentence" was interpolated as early as Aśoka, and indeed, even earlier, though it could also of course have been interpolated as late as the canon was (truly) closed. We will momentarily discuss the question of when we should imagine the concept found its way into the text further.

Second, however, in terms of its content, the fact that the "*dhammakāya* sentence" was interpolated into the text later of course shows that whatever concepts it conveys were not integral to the concerns of the text at the time of its original redaction. This certainly makes it clear that the elaboration of the notion of *dhammakāya* could not have been the original purpose of this text, and thus that we can perhaps expect relatively few clues from the text as to the intent that was behind the elaboration of this concept in the first place.

I will argue, nonetheless, that despite this significant handicap, the text still offers us the best chance we have of determining what might have been meant by the term *dhammakāya.* In order to make this argument, however, it will be necessary to consider two possibilities, each of which is equally plausible in the abstract: (1) that the concept of the *dhammakāya* already existed, and was borrowed into the present context; and (2) that the concept of *dhammakāya* was elaborated "on the fly" precisely for the present context. Obviously, the respective implications of these two possibilities are quite different. Were the term borrowed from elsewhere, given that it is an interpolation here, we would not necessarily expect a very good

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nor the doxographical content later associated with those sectarian labels, dates as early as the actual diffraction into separate transmission lineages itself. An unusual partial parallel is also found in the portion of the *Madhyamâgama* corresponding to SN 8.7 the *Pavāraṅa-sutta* (for which see Bodhi 286-288): the Chinese Āgama inserts into the preamble of the dialogue a description of the Buddha not found in the Pāli, saying: "I am Brahman, and when I have attained cessation, I will be the unsurpassed Medicine-King. This present body is my final existence. Thus, you are my true sons, born of my mouth, created by the metamorphoses of the Dharma of all *dharmas;*" 我是梵志。得滅訖後。無上醫王。我今受身。最是後邊。謂汝等輩是我真子。從口而生。法法所化 T26.610a13-17.

"fit" between the meaning of the term as it was borrowed and the context it finds here; this would mean that the present context in fact gives us very little basis for the reconstruction of the meaning of the term. If, on the other hand, the term was interpolated but nonetheless tailor-made for the present context, then the present text as a whole will still give us the best chance of inferring what was meant by it in this context. To anticipate, I will argue that it is most likely that this sentence, and the notion of *dhammakāya* it contains, is in fact an *ad hoc* formation that was elaborated as a mere stopgap specifically for insertion into the present context. In order to make this argument, however, I first need to lay out my reasons for rejecting the possibility that it was borrowed from elsewhere.

Were the concept of *dhammakāya* borrowed from elsewhere for interpolation into the present passage, we would have in turn two logical possibilities for the external context from which it was borrowed: either (a) it was borrowed from a context of which we know some other evidence from the record, or (b) it was borrowed from a context lost to us. Each of these alternatives is either unlikely, or methodologically undesirable, or both.

Given that this is, to reiterate, the sole known instance of the term *dhammakāya* in the Pāli canon, if the term was here borrowed from some other context for which we have textual evidence, it must have been borrowed from a context for which our evidence is extant in texts outside the Pāli canon – either post-canonical Pāli texts, or texts for which our witnesses are in Chinese, Sanskrit, and other languages (not forgetting that our extant exemplars of the texts may well not be in the original languages).

However, the main two groups of candidate texts for the status of source text for the concept of *dhammakāya/dharmakāya* as we see it here are (a) early Mahāyāna texts; or (b) other

"Mainstream" sources not included in the Pāli canon. In either case, to entertain the possibility that the term *dhammakāya* in the present text was borrowed from such a context, we have to consider quite a large suspension of the usual assumptions applied in the evaluation of the textual record for questions of dates. That is to say, we would either have to assume (a) if the usual dates for early Mahāyāna and non-Pāli Mainstream texts are correct, that the Pāli canon was not entirely closed by 100 B.C.E., and that in this case we are looking at an instance of a concept that found its way into a text after that supposed closing date; or (b) if the usual dates for the closing of the Pāli canon are to hold, that whatever Mahāyāna or non-Pāli Mainstream text the concept comes from is older than 100 B.C.E.

Both of these alternatives are methodologically unattractive, since they would require us to conclude that assumptions we use to think about a large range of materials and ideas are false, all for the sake of explaining this single passage. Of course, that it would falsify something so large in our received "knowledge" about our materials does not *a priori* make it impossible that the term here was indeed borrowed from some known context, but we should at least be clear about the ramifications of this possibility if we are to entertain it.

These methodological considerations aside, however, were it indeed the case that the term here had been borrowed from some known context in this apparently anachronistic manner, it would further mean, unless we presumed that the entire text had been added late to the canon (which does even more violence to our assumptions about the composition of the canon) that what we see in the present passage is an interpolation into the text of some notion of *dhammakāya* as that concept is later known to us. To my mind, quite apart from questions of relative chronology, two further considerations militate against this possibility. Here I must anticipate my argument below about the meaning of the term in its context somewhat.

First, as I hope to show below, the term *dhammakāya* is integrated relatively seamlessly into the argument of the text as a whole, and this provides us with a perfectly plausible motive for the elaboration of the notion here, in service of the text's polemic against Brahmanical discourse.[742]

Second, however, and perhaps more tellingly, it is by contrast more difficult to reconstruct any plausible motive for the *interpolation* of the term *in its later sense* into this particular context (remembering of course that it was most likely indeed interpolated in *some* sense). As we will see below when we examine other Pāli-canonical passages usually treated as precedents for the notion of *dharmakāya*, when later tradition was to look in early texts for the presence of *ideas* that warranted (or, from our perspective, foreshadowed) their notion of *dharmakāya,* they most typically looked to two places: the idea that "seeing the Dharma is seeing the Buddha", and the idea that the teacher and refuge for the Saṃgha after the Buddha's passing was to be the *dharmavinaya*. If a hypothetical interpolator was going to insert the concept of the *dharmakāya* anywhere, then, we would expect him to do it in such a passage. It is, however, difficult to see why anyone should interpret later notions of *dharmakāya* into a passage such as this one, which ultimately finally devolves on the status, not of the Buddha, but of the Saṃgha of accomplished Arhats. (I will argue below, in fact, in examining the canonical parallels for the notion of the Saṃgha as the "heirs" and "offspring of the mouth" of the Tathāgata, that if anything, such passages might well be read as tending towards a reading whereon *the Saṃgha itself* was the (or a) true "body" of the Buddha after his passing, as much as or more than that his true body is somehow to be found in the teachings or some abstruse metaphysical category.)

[742] Not forgetting, of course, the possibility that this is a particularly inventive *post hoc* aetiological justification for the term!

Further, it would be difficult to argue, on the strength of the interpretation of the term *dhamma* in the rest of this text, that it is necessarily the term *dhamma/dharma* as it enters into later notions of the *dharmakāya,* or anything closely related thereto.[743] It is rather generally, and far more than is usually the case in Pāli-canonical texts, used in a sense very close to the *dharmaśāstra* sense of the word, to mean something like "doing the right thing", "acting properly", and as we have seen, it is closely associated with the sense in which the term *dharma* is associated with the caste system and social roles. The term Dhamma is used to refer to the Khattiya caste, and several times in the "titles" (*akkhara*) they introduced for their roles, and the genesis of this caste is said to have been "in accordance with Dhamma, and not otherwise";[744] so too for the Brahmins, the Vessas, and the Suddas; and also the class of ascetics (who are not specifically identified as Buddhist).[745] At *each* juncture, including those not especially Buddhist in their content, the refrain "Dhamma's the best thing for people/ In this life and the next as well" is repeated. This same formula is of course also used of the attainment of the Arhat;[746] and the king, in honouring Gotama, is said to honour the Dhamma.[747] It thus seems that there is a deliberate partial *rapprochement* here between the Buddhist and the *dharmaśāstric* usages of the term, presumably as part of the overall rhetorical ploy of the text to appropriate and turn to Buddhist use the terms of its Brahmanical interlocutors; the term is deliberately kept vague, so that it can refer equally to any point along a whole gamut of both "worldly" and "transcendent" goods, from the dutiful service of the Śūdra caste to the

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[743] This despite the fact that secondary scholars to date seem uniformly to have seen in it such a meaning. See below n. 763.

[744] Walshe 413.

[745] Walshe 414.

[746] Walshe 408, 415.

[747] Walshe 409.

attainment of the Arhat. In none of this, however, is there any real indication that the text means, by *dhamma,* either the teaching,[748] the special qualities of the Buddha, or a transcendent metaphysical absolute, which as we shall see later in this dissertation are the most usual interpretations of *dharmakāya* elsewhere, and at best, any notion of *dhammakāya* compatible with later readings would be a poor and somewhat forced fit here. Of course, it is certainly true that interpolators do make forced fits on occasion, and so this argument is not, on its own, enough to controvert the possibility that the term is interpolated here from some other context in which it was known; but on the balance, it is difficult, given this lack of fit, to see why this, of all passages, should be the one place that an interpolator would have inserted the concept of *dharmakāya* as it was understood in later, more typical usages.

In sum, then, the hypothesis that the term was interpolated into the present context from some source known to us meets the following difficulties: it would either require the closing of the Pāli canon to be later or some non-Pāli-canonical source to be earlier than we usually assume; and it is difficult to construct a plausible notion for such an interpolation, both because the text here is primarily concerned with delineating the status of the Saṃgha, not the Buddha, and because the notion of Dhamma in this text is not especially compatible with that notion as it enters into known later conceptions of *dhammakāya.*

Turning, then, to the other logical possibility if the term *dhammakāya* here is derived from some external context, it is also possible, of course, that it was borrowed here from some *unknown* source, i.e. a source of which we no longer have any evidence. This is a bleak possibility for intellectual history, though once more, that mere fact does not make it *a priori* impossible that

[748] The only possible justification for seeing the word *dhamma* as referring to the teaching here is that the Arhats are spoken of as "born of [the Buddha's] mouth"; but we recall that this peculiarity can already be accounted for by the fact that the Brāhmaṇical formula contends that Brahmins are born of Brahma's mouth.

it is indeed the case. But in such a situation, not only could we could say no more about the "origin" of the concept of *dhammakāya,* but we would also be helpless to decide whether the current passage does indeed represent the earliest instance of the term or not. This possibility must remain merely hypothetical, therefore, since nothing positive is gained by considering it. We can work only with the evidence we have.

The only things we do gain from considering the possibility that the term was here borrowed from some unknown external context are negative, but not for that reason negligible. First, it is obvious that if the term is derived from some unknown context but, for the various reasons above, its use here is not especially compatible with later senses of the same term, it is unlikely that it meant in that unknown context the same thing as it did in our extant later sources. This would mean that whatever its original meaning, we do not know it, and that we certainly cannot derive it backwards from the sources we do have. Second, we also see that even if this is the earliest *known* usage of the term *dhammakāya,* we cannot therefore assume that it is *in fact* the first usage ever, and that the present text somehow preserves for us a freeze-frame of the moment of doctrinal invention when the concept was minted.[749] It would be too much, therefore, on the strength of the arguments I advance below about the significance of the term *in this context* – even if they were all accepted – to conclude that the term *dhammakāya* was in fact first coined as an *ad hoc* step in an argument actually designed to prove that the Buddha was the best claimant for the title of *brahma,* and thereby prove that the Saṃgha are in fact the most estimable and noble group in Indian society. The best we can conclude is that this is the most reasonable explanation with the evidence we have to hand.

[749] A failure to observe this methodological distinction between what can be known from our very partial record and what may in fact have taken place historically, it seems to me, is one of the few serious failings of Lambert Schmithausen's awe-inspiring study of the concept of *ālayavijñāna*: it seems to me that Schmithausen tries too hard to discern the very genesis of the term, and places too much faith in quite speculative conclusions about the reasons it was elaborated as a result.

For the interim, then, for these various reasons, it seems safest to me to conclude that the current passage was interpolated into the text sometime after transmission lineages diverged for the various versions of the text we now have, but nonetheless before the closure of the Pāli canon; that it was either interpolated by importation from some source of a kind now unknown to us, or elaborated precisely for interpolation in the present context; that in either case, we have little reason to expect it to be consistent with any later sense of the term *dhammakāya/dharmakāya,* and several reasons to expect it rather to diverge from them; and that, once more in either case, our best chance of determining the earliest meaning of the term is by close scrutiny of the present context, despite the fact that it is part of an acknowledged interpolation even there. For these reasons, I now turn to several considerations I think we must bear in mind if we are to interpret it accurately in its present context.

There are several points about this passage that we must observe if we are to interpret it reasonably accurately in its own context, that is, in isolation from any significance it may have come to have for the later tradition as the root passage for the important notion of *dharmakāya*.

First, we must not lose sight of the fact that the term is first elaborated in a polemical context. In this context, as so often when engaging with interlocutors from outside the Buddhist fold (very often, as here, Brahmanical interlocutors), the text clearly improvises *ad hoc* analogues to terms well-known in non-Buddhist (here Brahmanical) discourse. This is clearly the case with the phrase, "a son of the Bhagavan, born of his mouth, born of Dhamma, created by Dhamma, an heir of Dhamma". This is transparently nothing but a retransposition into a Buddhist key of the phrase that the text tells us was already well-known enough that it could be plausibly portrayed as used in a regular taunt, " true children of Brahmā, born from his mouth, born of

Brahmā, created by Brahmā, heirs of Brahmā". It is equally likely, I contend, that it is also the case with the "*dhammakāya* sentence, despite the fact that this sentence is a later interpolation.

The likelihood that the term *dhammakāya* itself is likewise part of this *ad hoc* riffing on a borrowed trope is reinforced by the fact that two of four of the series of epithets in which it occurs incorporate the term *brahma*: *brahmakāya, brahmabhuta.* As commentators regularly point out, the text is here playing on the ambiguity of the word *brahma,* which means not only Brahman as the highest metaphysical principle, but also simply "excellent".[750] The intent, however, is still clearly to appropriate the highest value of Braham*ism,* and to claim, effectively, "If you want *brahman,* we'll give you *brahman* – the Buddha, now there is a being that is truly *brahma* (excellent)."

This reading can also be supported, perhaps slightly contentiously, by a close examination of the second pair of epithets, viz. *dhammabhuta, brahmabhuta.* The second member of each of these compounds, *-bhuta,* is potentially somewhat difficult of interpretation here. Walshe has translated according to the derivational significance of the term, which literally means "become", from the root */bhū,* "to become, to be". However, Gregory Schopen has discussed in detail the various possible readings of the suffix *–bhūta* in Sanskrit, for contexts which are predominantly at least slightly later than this passage (and in some cases significantly later).[751] He notes that in addition to the meaning "become", Skt. *-bhūta* can also be interpreted in some contexts to have a an emphatic or even "expletive" sense, so that we would read perhaps "[He] *is* the Dhamma; [he] *is brahma* (most excellent)". Schopen further notes several instances from Conze's *Materials for a Dictionary of the Prajñāpāramitā Literature* in which *–bhūta* goes further

[750] See e.g. Walshe's n. 823 and 824, p. 604.

[751] "The Phrase", 49-50, and especially 61 n. 57.

again and takes on the meaning of "true", "veritable" etc.[752] In this case, we might even read, "[He is] the true Dhamma; [he is] the true Brahman," in the sense that the text is claiming that the Buddha encapsulates in his very being the veritable stuff of what we mean by *dhamma* and *brahma*(*n*).

In a context where the overall claim is that the *dhamma* is what is "most excellent" (*brahma*!, "the best" *seṭṭha*[753]), and in which this claim is further advanced against assumed interlocutors for whom the highest value *is* "*brahma*(*n*)", it is clear that the overall thrust of the passage must be to show that it is genuinely meaningful, and not merely a rhetorical sleight of hand, to speak of the Tathāgata *as brahma;* and, thus, that the *ad hoc,* passing characterisation of him as "*dhammakāya*" (for the sense of which see below) is merely a step on the way to this goal. Indeed, in conformity with what this logic would lead us to expect, as soon as the text, as modified by the interpolation of the "*dhammakāya* sentence", arrives at the characterisation of the Buddha as *brahmabhuta,* it changes the topic and departs on the lengthy cosomogonic narrative that occupies its remainder. In other words, it seems, the characterisation of the Buddha as *brahmabhuta* brings its argument here to a close, and we can consider its point proven. Thus, when the text says, in its final sentence justifying its move in speaking of monks as "born of the [Buddha's] mouth . . . heir[s] of the Dhamma", etc.:

> "Why is that? Because, Vāseṭṭha, this designates the Tathāgata: 'The Body of Dhamma' (*dhammakāyo*), that is, 'The Body of Brahmā', or 'Become Dhamma' (*dhammabhuto*[754]), that is 'Become Brahmā'."

[752] "The Phrase" 61 n. 57. It is not clear from these references exactly which texts Conze was drawing on, but obviously they cannot be earlier than the earliest Prajñāpāramitā text, and thus most likely later than anything in the Pāli canon, including the present passage.

[753] In the verse refrain repeated several times through the text: see Walshe 408, 409, 413, 414, 415.

[754] Walshe's interpretation of this term may not be the most illuminating; see immediately below.

I believe that without over-reading, we can draw out more explicitly the argumentative logic underlying this sentence as follows:

> "In what sense can we say this? We can say it because we can say of the Tathāgata that he 'embodies the Dhamma', so to speak, that is, that he 'embodies the best of all things' (i.e. *brahma* in the true sense); indeed, that he no less than '*is* the true Dhamma', that is, that he '*is* most truly the best of all things'." [QED!]

In the context of such a logic, it is relative easy to motivate the inclusion of the concept of "body". The overriding conceit at work is one of progenesis: the Arhat is the son of [the] Buddha. But progenesis, in the prototypical instance, is a corporeal process. Everyone knows, in this context, about the "body of Brahman" (the reference to the cosmogonic myth of Mahāpuruṣa), but the question might naturally occur: what exactly is the "body" of the Buddha, on this analogy, that the Arhat can be said to be "born of his mouth", etc., and therefore to be his "heir"? The missing link in the argument, of course, is Dhamma, which the text has already been arguing is in fact the most excellent thing: where the Brahmanical formula uncomplicatedly has Brahmins being "sons" of Brahma born, "born of him, his heirs", etc., the equation must be drawn between the Buddha and this Dhamma, already established as excellence, before the whole equation will work. Thus, Arhats are said to be "born *of Dhamma*, created *by Dhamma*, an heir *of Dhamma*", and it is necessary for the text, by way of obviation of the potential non sequitur this entails, to say, "Oh, and of course, the Dhamma is the 'body' of the Buddha we are talking about," such that Arhats born from that body are sons, heirs etc. of the Buddha exactly after the Brahmanical analogy.

To interpret the passage thus is, of course, to read the epithet *dhammakāya* in quite a loose and non-technical sense; we can read it either as a *bahuvrīhi* meaning more literally that he "has the *dhamma* for his body", in other words, that he is embodied in the *dhamma*;[755] or we can break the compound down as genitive-headword (**dhammassa kāya*) and read either *bahuvrīhi* "[he is characterised by or possesses] the 'body' of the *dhamma*" or as *tatpuruṣa* "[he is] the body of the *dhamma*", in the latter case yielding the reading he embodies the *dhamma* rather than being embodied in it. But these various analyses, especially in the context of this *ad hoc* formulation where we cannot expect it to have been a matter of great significance exactly how the logical relations between logical subject and predicate break down, amount to much the same thing: in some sense, the Buddha and the Dhamma can be said to be identical.

A second point we must also keep firmly in view is that the actual focus in this discourse is not the metaphysical status of the Buddha, but the status of *the Saṃgha* of accomplished Arhats, and particularly its warrant for laying claim to a status as the noblest and most estimable group in all of Indian society. That there are several such passages, but no others in which the term *dhammakāya* is used, suggests even more strongly that the term *dhammakāya* is almost a nonce word here, coined on the fly to serve a special rhetorical purpose, and that we must therefore be careful of ascribing to it too much profound doctrinal significance. I will return to this point below, and there, the focus of the present passage will become even clearer when we will examine those parallel passages which, like this one, call monks "the heirs of the Dhamma" (*dhammadāyāda*). Suffice it to say for the present, however, that we are not confronted here with a text that is concerned to clarify the status of the Buddha or to discourse on the nature of his embodiment.

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755 See Harrison, "Real Phantom Body" 79 n. 22.

Third, if we look beyond this passage, this impression that *dhammakāya* is here a nonce-formation is supported even further when we compare it to the notions of *brahmabhuta* and *dhammabhuta*. Whereas *dhammakāya,* which willy-nilly was to become such an important term later in the tradition, only occurs this once, even the apparently polemical *brahmabhuta* occurs more often in the canon. It is used in a characterisation of the state of one who has achieved the religious goal;[756] it is part of a string of epithets of the Bhagavan;[757] and the Buddha is portrayed as using it of himself.[758] Each of these pericopae, let us note, is attested multiple times. It is also found among another list of epithets of the Buddha.[759] Moreover, it also recurs as part of a characterisation of Arhats themselves in a context which has resonances with this one (Arhats are further described as "the Buddha's bosom sons").[760]

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[756] Note that in this case the epithet is not even applied necessarily to the Buddha: the text speaks of one who "torments neither himself or others", who "dwells in this life without craving, released (*nibutto*), cool, enjoying bliss, become as Brahmā (*brahmabhūtena)*"; DN 33, *Sangīti-sutta,* Walshe 494. See also MN 51, *Kandaraka-sutta,* where it becomes a refrain: Ñāṇamoli 445, 448, 453; repeated in MN 60, *Apaṇṇaka-sutta,* Ñāṇamoli 412; also at MN 94, *Ghoṭamukha-sutta,* Ñāṇamoli 773; also at AN 4.20.198, "The Self-Tormentor", Woodward and Hare II, 218, 221, 225. The same characterisation is used of the Arhat in a different context in AN 3.7.66, "Sāḷha", Woodward and Hare I, 178.

[757] SN 35.116, "Going to the End of the World": "Knowing, the Blessed One knows; seeing, he sees; he has become vision[lit. 'the eye'], he has become knowledge, *he has become the Dhamma, he has become the holy one* (*cakkhubhuto ñāṇabhuto dhammabhuto brahmabhuto*); he is the expounded, the proclaimer, the elucidator of meaning, the giver of the Deathless, the lord of the Dhamma, the Tathāgata"; Bodhi 1189; repeated at SN 35.117, "Cords of Sensual Pleasure", Bodhi 1191. See also MN 18, *Madhupiṇḍika-sutta,* Ñāṇamoli 203; MN 133, *Mahākaccānabhaddekaratta-sutta,* Ñāṇamoli 1046; AN 10.12.115, Woodward and Hare V, 157; etc.

[758] SuN v. 561, 563, , "Having become Brahmā (*brahmabhuto*), unequalled crusher of Māra's armies, having subdued all enemies, I rejoice, having no fear from any quarter", Norman 74: *brahmabhuto atitulo mārasenappamaddano/ sabbāmitte vasikatvā modāmi akutohayo.* This text is the *Sela-sutta,* and is repeated in its entirety, including of course this verse and this epithet, at MN 92, Ñāṇamoli 760.

[759] Iti 68, "The First Lust Sutta", Masefield 55: "That one, they say, is a certain one amongst those by whom self has been brought into being, one Brahma-become, a Tathāgata, a Buddha, one gone past animosity and fear, one abandoning all", *bhāvitattaññataraṃ brahmabhūtaṃ tathāgataṃ/ buddhaṃ verabhayātītaṃ āhu sabbappahāyina.*

[760] SN 22.76, "Arahants", Bodhi 912. This instance of the epithet is obscured by Bodhi's translation, "the holy ones".

We can also note that the epithet *dhammabhuta,* likewise, though not as widespread in the canon as *brahmabhuta,* is also found elsewhere. It also is part of one broadly attested set of epithets of the Buddha just examined;[761] in addition, however, it is also used on one occasion as an epithet of the seven Buddhas (of the past, presumably).[762]

The use of *dhammabhuta* to characterise the Buddha(s), therefore, and the use of *brahmabhuta* even more widely to characterise not just Buddhas but all Arhats, contrasts starkly with the single use we observe in our present passage of the term *dhammakāya.* Likewise, the term *brahmakāya* is not found elsewhere. It seems most likely, therefore, that this penultimate pair of epithets is, as I have already argued on other grounds, merely a nonce way station preparing the ground for arrival at the true argumentative goal of equating the Buddha with true *brahman* by calling him *dhammabhuta, brahmabhuta* – which characterisations may well have already been better known than the novel coinages that precede them.

It would be pinning too much on this single interpolation of the term *dhammakāya,* most likely at least a century earlier than any other instance of the term we have in our extant record and into a text whose focus is elsewhere, to use this passage as evidence that any later-documented notion of *dhammakāya/dharmakāya* was already present in the Pāli materials. The largest lesson of the current passage carefully considered, I contend, is negative: that there was *no* clearly documentable notion of the *dharmakāya,* in any sense continuous with the later concept, in the

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[761] See n. 757.

[762] ThaG 491, "The seven Buddhas are rid of craving, without grasping, plunging into annihilation, by whom, *having become righteousness* (*dhammbhūtehi*), venerable, this doctrine was taught"; Norman, *Elders' Verses* I, 50.

Pāli-canonical era. The field to date, including even doyens like la Vallée Poussin and the Pauls Demiéville and Harrison, have assumed too much when they have claimed that there was.[763]

This means, of course, that the question of the actual origins of the notion of *dharmakāya,* as we find it in the later materials, is left completely open. Indeed, one of the most deleterious effect of the simplistic reading of the present passage in the anachronistic terms of later notions of *dharmakāya,* it seems to me, has been that the very *question* of where the concept of *dharmakāya* came from has never even been properly asked, let alone answered. The problem extends even further than this, however, because, as I have argued thus far through other sections of this dissertation, it is false to imagine, with la Vallée Poussin, that we see *any* coherent discourse of Buddha bodies in the Pāli-canonical materials. On the other hand, as I will argue in more detail in subsequent chapters, the concept of *dharmakāya* is the first clearly articulated concept of a special Buddha-body, called *kāya* and made the subject of explicit doctrinal speculation, that we find anywhere in our record. This means that the origin of the *dharmakāya* is also the origin of the discourse of *buddhakāya* discourse *per se,* and that by assuming unjustifiably, on the sole basis of the present passage, that the concept of *dhammakāya* at least was already present in the Pāli canon, previous researchers have also omitted to frame properly the very *question* of the

[763] To give just some examples, to show that even the most astute scholars of this question have equally made this error: "Ici le term dharmakâya, qui va recevoir ailleurs des interprétations si subtiles, ne désigne rien d'autre que l'ensemble (kâya) de la Loi prêchée par le B.;" Demiéville 176. [In the Pāli canon] "le vrai corps du Bouddha n'est pas le corps matériel . . . mais l'enseignement, le Dharma (ou le Dharmavinaya, comme dit une version chinoise) qui survit au Bouddha et de qui naissent les fils de Śākya . . . . Cette interprétation, *dharmakāya = pravacanakāya* [sic!] = l'Enseignement our Saddharma, n'a jamais été oubliée . . . "; la Vallée Poussin, "Appendice" 765-766, citing exactly the present passage. Paul Harrison, similarly, cites the Pāli passage in the overall context of his development of a characterisation of "the Mainstream understanding", which he sees as being prior to any Mahāyāna notion of *dharmakāya* and indeed to persist into the early Mahāyāna. This argument is based upon problematic assumptions about relative priority and chronology, so that there is a significant danger of circularity in the use of precisely the present passage. The point for our purposes here, however, is that the present passage can only serve as part of the evidence for a putative prior "Mainstream interpretation" if it indeed supports that interpretation. I thus suspect, although Harrison never quite says so outright, that he views the present passage as consistent with a reading of the *dhamma-* in *dhammakāya* as meaning either the teachings or the *buddhadharmāḥ,* that is, the "undefiled *dharmas* or qualities which make a Buddha a Buddha"; see "Real Phantom Body", 50, 55, 58 etc.

real origins of *buddhakāya* discourse. It will be a major task of the remainder of this dissertation to address this question, a task that is thus arguably undertaken properly for the first time here in the secondary literature; but for the present we must defer these larger questions for later.

This leads, of course, to the question of exactly how we are to treat this single instance[764] of the term *dhammakāya* for intellectual-historical purposes. On the basis of these arguments, however, we may be justified in assuming that when the term *dharmakāya* was first used outside the Pāli canon, it is most likely that it was used in the knowledge of the current passage, and that in fact, the term was picked out of this passage to be applied to its new role. This seems a far more plausible alternative than that the term was somehow coincidentally invented twice, and that later apologists and exegetes had the good fortune that this passage was awaiting them as a textual warrant for the term. This means, however, that whatever the actual origins of the term might have been, which could be lost to us forever now in the murky depths of time, this passage was all later doctrinal innovators had to go on in elaborating their new doctrinal category, and that this passage was probably the *effective* origin of the term, so far as the later tradition is concerned.

If, however, as I have just argued, there is not enough in this passage to suggest to us, as intellectual and doctrinal historians, any particular interpretation of the term in its implications for the status of the Buddha, this was arguably most likely every bit as much the case for the hypothetical doctrinal innovator who plucked the term out of this marginal obscurity and redressed it for stardom. It seems likely, then, that we see here a case not unlike

[764] As I observed in my "Introduction" (see §1.3.7), this sole instance of the term *dhammakāya* in the Pāli canon is thus merely one instance, if perhaps the most important and vexing, of a more general type of problem that confronts us at a number of points throughout this study – the difficulty of determining the significance and status of the unique example of a given concept in a given context. Other examples include the Iti 44 use of *sopādi-* and *anupādisesanibbānadhātu,* the ascription of "life-breath" to relics, so celebrated by Schopen, in the Bajaur Inscription, and so on.

the case of Zhiyi's 智顗 (538-597) famous elaboration of the central Tiantai 天台 concept of "three thousand quiddities in a single moment" (*yi nian sanqian* 一念三千), that is, a case in which a later innovator in the tradition has taken a marginal locution in an authoritative earlier text, for which there is thus impeccable scriptural warrant and also ample room for creative interpretation, and taken it as the foundation for what was to become a massive edifice of new thought.

3.2.2 "Sons of the Buddha, born of his mouth . . ." The Saṃgha as an embodiment of the Buddha?

In examining the passage above, we saw that it came from a text that was in fact primarily aimed at showing that the Saṃgha of accomplished Arhats were the most estimable and noble group in Indian society, and should be honoured even above kings. This aspect of the passage has also never been observed in the context of the study of doctrines of Buddha bodies, presumably because it was thought to be irrelevant to the matter at hand. And yet, under better scrutiny, this dimension of the text reveals its overall thrust to lie even further away from the usual aims of *dhammakāya* discourse than our analysis thus far would indicate. This fact can be shown readily if we survey the other canonical passages most closely parallel to the key passage in question. We have seen above that the epithets *dhammakāya* and *brahmakāya* are unique to this passage, that is, obviously, without parallel. But the immediately preceding formula, "sons of the Buddha, born of his mouth, born of his breast,[765] born of the Dhamma, created by the Dhamma, heirs of the *dhamma*", which describes Arhats as sons of the Buddha etc., does have some close parallels, and we will now examine them in brief.

[765] *oraso . . . jāto.* We saw above that Walshe does not translate this word in the "*dhammakāya*" passage.

A partial version of the formula occurs in the "Sundarī" verses in Therīgāthā, where Sundarī declares to the Buddha, "You are the Buddha, you are the teacher, I am your daughter, brahman, your true child, born from your mouth, my task done, without *āsavas*."[766] Sundarī's description of herself here makes it clear that the notion of a "true child" of the Buddha here applies to the Arhat, as in DN 27.

Iti 100, "The Brahmin, Dhamma and Sacrifice Sutta", begins with this declaration from the Buddha:

> "I, monks, am a brahmin, one attending to beggars, always, one with hands cleansed, one bearing his last person [*sic,* "last body" *antimadeha*], the unsurpassed, dart-removing physician; of this same I are you sons, breast(-born), born from the mouth, Dhamma-born, Dhamma-conjured, Dhamma-heirs, not heirs to things material."[767]

The text goes on to proclaim the supremacy of aspects of the relation to the Dhamma over a number of worldly goods: of gifts of Dhamma over including gifts of material things; of sharing of Dhamma over sharing of material things; of help with the Dhamma over help with material things; the "sacrifice of the Dhamma" over the sacrifice of material things. In general, therefore, the overall thrust of the text is similar in part to that of DN 27, into which the *dhammakāya* sentence was interpolated: to show that Dhamma is a higher value than worldly "goods", in both senses of the word.

The same formula is also used in SN 16.11 "The Robe", but on this occasion it is used of Mahākassapa, and found in the mouth of Kassapa himself, with the addition at the end of "a receiver of worn-our hempen rag-robes" (*paṭiggahetā sāṇāni paṃsukulāni nibbasanānī*), referring to the fact that, Kassapa has just related, the Blessed One favoured him by exchanging robes

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[766] ThiG 336, "Sundarī", Norman, *Elders' Verses* II, 35: *tuvaṃ buddho tuvaṃ satthā tuyhaṃ dhītāmhi brāhmaṇa/ orasā mukhato jātā katakiccā nāsavā.*

[767] Masefield 99: *ahamasmi bhikkhave brāhmaṇo yācayogo sadā payatapāṇī antimadehadharo anuttaro bhisakko sallakatto. tassa me tumhe puttā orasā mukhato jātā dhammajā dhammanimmitā dhammadāyādā no āmisadāyādā.*

with him.[768] It is also seen as part of a *sutta* devoted to the praise of Sāriputta as a paragon, the *Anupada-sutta* MN 111: the text states, "Bhikkhus, rightly speaking, were it to be said of anyone: 'He is the son of the Blessed One, born of his breast, born of his mouth, born of the Dhamma, created by the Dhamma, an heir in the Dhamma, not an heir in material things,' it is of Sāriputta indeed that rightly speaking this should be said."[769] It seems, thus, that the formula was deployed in the battles for supremacy among the followers of Sāriputta and the followers of Mahākassapa, traces of which are sometimes descried elsewhere in the canon.

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[768] Bodhi 679. Unsurprisingly, this formula appears also in Āgama parallels, as here in the *Saṃyuktâgama:* "Ānanda, if anyone should rightly ask [*sic*, 若有正問], 'Who is the Dharma-son of the World-Honoured One, born of the mouth of the Buddha, born of the metamorphoses of the Dharma, endowed with the wealth of the Dharma, viz. the *dhyānas, vimukti, samādhi,* and the prophecy of future Buddhahood [?正受, *samāpatti*?]?' then you should say that I [Kāśyapa] am; to say so would be to speak aright." 阿難。若有正問。誰是世尊法子。從佛口生・從法化生。付以法財。諸禪・解脫・三昧・正受。應答我是。是則正說, T99.303c02-05; etc.

Another interesting case, not strictly paralleled in the Pāli version of the text, is also found elsewhere in the same text, corresponding to SN 40.1-6 (at Bodhi 1302-1306), but speaking rather of Mahāmodgalyāyana: "'The 'son of the Buddha, born of the Buddha's mouth, born of the metamorphoses of Dharma, heritor of a share of the Buddha's Dharma' of whom the correct doctrine speaks – rightly speaking, that one is me. And why? I am a son of the Buddha, born of the Buddha's mouth, born of the metamorphoses of the Dharma, heritor of a share of the Buddha's Dharma", 若正說佛子從佛口生。從法化生。得佛法分者。則我身是也。所以者何。我是佛子。從佛口生。從法化生。得佛法分, T99.132b01-03. In this latter case, the Pāli text rather says merely, "If, friends, one speaking rightly could say of anyone, 'He is a disciple who attained to greatness of direct knowledge with the assistance of the Teacher', it is of me that one could rightly say this;" *yaṃ hi taṃ āvuso sammāvadamāno vadeyya satthārānuggahito sāvako mahābhiññataṃ pattoti,* Bodhi infra (a repeated refrain). The Pāli here is of further interest because the Buddha is portrayed as coming to teach Moggallāna by means of *iddhi,* that is, presumably, in a kind of *manomayakāya* (though the term is not used); Ch. 以神通力, T99.132b07-08.

The tradition that Mahākāśyapa was the heritor of the robe of the Buddha was of course to have a long later history in East Asian Chan/Zen.

It may be of interest to note that of the two texts discussed in this sentence and the next, the Mahākassapa text has about it the subjective feel of an "older" text, in terms of criteria sometimes applied to such questions: it uses the conceit that a person's "head would split" if they laid false claim to accomplishment; Kassapa is portrayed as having reached "final knowledge" in a stereotypical seven days; it describes his attainments in terms of a model of successive *jhānas* and superknowledges; it uses various colourful metaphors and figures; and it is replete with a wealth of concrete detail. By contrast, the Sāriputta text is a string of formulae, with little specificity to his person or to any particular occasion or incidents.

[769] Ñāṇamoli 902: *yaṃ kho taṃ bhikkhave, sammā vadamāno vadeyya: bhagavato putto oraso mukhato jāto dhammajo dhammanimmito dhammadāyādo no āmisadāyādo'ti sāriputtameva taṃ sammā vadamāno vadeyya bhagavato putto oraso mukhato jāto dhammajo dhammanimmito dhammadāyādo no āmisadāyādo'ti*

Finally, perhaps the most extended development of this conceit of monks (here all monks, not just Arhats as in the *Aggañña-sutta* above) as the heirs of the Buddha is of course, found in MN 3, the *Dhammadāyāda-sutta,* "The Discourse on the Heirs of the Dhamma", the first half of which is devoted to its somewhat idiosyncratic elaboration. The emphasis here, however, is on the injunction to be the heir of the Tathāgata in Dhamma as opposed to his heir in "material things" (*āmisadāyādā*). After explaining that this will allow monks to avoid reproach, the text devotes itself to an exegesis of a test case of this principle, in which it is shown that monks who refuse to eat the leftovers of the Tathāgata's almsfood and render themselves physically weak in obedience to the letter of the injunction do not really understand it, where monks who eat the food in order to have the energy for practice are true Dhamma heirs.[770] This text therefore reads almost like an early commentary of sorts on the declaration that monks are (or injunction that they ought to be?) Dhamma-heirs and "not heirs to things material" in Iti 100, intended to sort out some misunderstandings that had arisen in its interpretation.

We thus see that the DN 27 passage in which *dhammakāya* occurs is part of a more widely attested trope about the true or Dhamma heir(s) of the Buddha. The present formula, as it is used in the service of this trope, is not always explicitly counterpoised to the Brahminical version of the formula on which it is apparently modelled: indeed, it is in fact only in DN 27 itself that the opposition is explicit. On the other hand, we should also note that DN 27 also fits in with a broader pattern in the Pāli canon of contesting the claim of the Brahmin caste to the highest place in the hierarchy of social and spiritual values; in addition to the use of the Buddhist version of this formula, which clearly appropriates the Brahminical formula (though in some cases without counterpoising it explicitly to the Brahminical version, as we have just

[770] Ñāṇamoli 97-98.

seen), we also find texts in which the veracity of the Brahminical version is disputed without substitution by the Buddhist version.[771]

In the various texts in which it is used, the Buddhist version of the formula is put to the service of various agendas. In Iti 100, as in DN 27, it is used as part of an argument that Dhamma is superior to all worldly "goods", but the argument is, as it were, "for domestic consumption" rather than directed at external polemical targets; that is to say, it is designed to inculcate in the monks themselves the correct hierarchy of values, not to obtain the estimation of the world at large for their adherence to those values. In SN 16.11 and MN 111, by contrast, it is turned to use in the contest for supremacy between the followers of Mahākassapa and Sāriputta, and the claim is made on behalf of each that he (alone) is the true or foremost heir of the Buddha and the Dhamma.

Here, however, more than these various modulations on the theme, I would like to draw attention to the underlying basic conceit of a monk, monks or Arhats as true heritors of the Buddha and/as Dhamma, expressed in the corporeal terms of progenesis.

The general notion that monks, Arhats etc. are "true heirs of the Buddha" etc. has sometimes been taken in the secondary literature as constituting a Pāli-canonical antecedent of the later notion of the *dharmakāya.* It seems clear, however, that this claim has rested solely on the presence of the sole instance of the term *dhammakāya* in the Pāli canon in one of the instances of this formula, and not on any careful consideration of the actual content of this concept, nor

[771] Note that there are other passages and texts in the canon that are concerned to refute the contention that Brahmins are the noblest and most pure group in society, expressed in terms of the formula appropriated by the Buddhist formula under discussion here, in which the refutation does not entail the use of the Buddhist formula. Thus MN 84, *Mahurā-sutta,* Ñāṇamoli 698-703; MN 93, *Assalāyana-sutta,* Ñāṇamoli 763-770.

of the ways it is used in various texts where the formula occurs. As I showed above, however, the term *dhammakāya* is most likely an interpolation in the sole instance of this formula in which it does occur, and so there is little reason to assume on that basis alone that there is much intrinsic connection between it and the various things the formula about the "heirs of the Buddha and Dhamma" is used to convey. Second, as I also hope to have convinced the reader above, even in the single text in which the term *dhammakāya* does occur in conjunction with this formula, there is little reason to think that the term is being used in any sense continuous with senses it assumes later in the tradition, which is double reason to be suspicious of any claims, on the basis of this passage, that the conceit of "heirs of the Buddha and Dhamma" has much to do with the eventual concept of the *dharmakāya.*

What, then, might the implications of this conceit be for the history of doctrines of the Buddha's embodiment? Let us recall that "true" sons, that is, heirs, were considered an extension of the person of the father from very early on in the Indian tradition, as is expressed by the inclusion of sons among things that are *amṛta* or "conducive to the prolongation or fulfilment of life or 'immortality'."[772] This suggests, as I have already hinted above, that if we are to interpret this formula as having anything to do with the general problematic of the embodiments of the Buddha, it will be more plausible to see in them the shadowy possibility of a conception of the Buddha's embodiment entirely different from that of the *dharmakāya*: that is, rather, the possibility that *the Saṃgha,* or some elite subset thereof, might be considered an embodiment of the Buddha. In other words, in this trope, the Saṃgha (or the Arhats, or Śāriputra or Mahākaśyapa, or whichever subset thereof the claim is made for) is considered to

[772] Olivelle, "*Amṛtā*", 428, 431. "In your offspring you are born again; that, O mortal, is your immortality" (*Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa* 1.5.5.6); "As long as one does not obtain a wife . . . one can never be reborn . . . . As soon as he obtains a wife, however, he is reborn;" (SB 5.2.1.10). Conception was conceived of as a process whereby the father implanted a tiny homunculus copy of himself in the womb of his wife; formulae were recited at the birth of the son that made it clear that the father saw in him his own entire person: "You are my self (*ātman*) called 'son';" *Pāraskara Gṛhyasūtra* 2.3.2, cited Olivelle 432.

constitute the embodiment of the Buddha after his passing as a son continues the identity of his father. In this light, it is significant that the formula talks about these "sons" inheriting from their "father" not only physically ("born of his breast, his mouth"); they also inherit his assets, his property, his treasure – i.e. the Dhamma.[773]

Such a conception of the Saṃgha as an embodiment of the Buddha would not be without support or analogues elsewhere. As we shall see below, *Aṣṭa* speaks of *saṃghaśarīra,* "the relic of the Saṃgha", in the same breath as "the relic of the Buddha" and "the relic of the Dharma".[774] This extension of the concept of relic, it seems to me, makes perfect sense. Given that the rubric of "relic", and thereby even of "body" *per se* (as I shall argue below), was extended first from the Buddha himself and his physical remnants to the *dharma,* it would make sense for it also to be extended to the third of the *triratna* ("three jewels" and refuges). Moreover, recall that in arguing that the relics of the Buddha were understood as his embodiment, I had occasion to argue from, among other grounds, a range of functional equivalences between the living Buddha and the relics. Similarly, several important functions of the living Buddha are continued by the Saṃgha, some of which overlap with relics (serving as recipients of offerings and veneration, and thereby acting as a significant "field of merit"; embodying certain virtues and ideals, like *śīla* etc.); and some of which do not overlap so often (in particular, preserving and preaching the Dharma). If it is possible to argue that relics are an embodiment of the Buddha on these grounds, then the argument must apply in the same degree to the Saṃgha.

[773] Note that in some of the Chinese Āgama variants cited above the list of these assets seems to be expanded; see n. 768.

[774] See p. 706 ff.

Despite these grounds upon which we might consider the Saṃgha as in some respects a veritable embodiment of the Buddha (somewhat after the manner that the Christian Church is a "body of Christ"[775]), I do not advance any strong claim to that effect in this dissertation, for two reasons. First, in substantive terms, I think there are several important distinctions between the Saṃgha and relics – my paradigmatic case for the extension of the rubric of "body" where it has not been extended by past studies – that mean such an extension would be more difficult to justify in the case of the Saṃgha. Most important among these differences are the fact that with the rare exception of cases like the *Aṣṭa* passage just referred to,[776] corporeal terminology is not usually used to refer to the Saṃgha; and the fact that, to my knowledge, the claim is nowhere made that being in the presence of the Saṃgha is somehow equivalent to being in the presence of the living Buddha. My other reason for refraining from pursuing those suggestive hints of the status of a "quasi-Buddha-body" that nonetheless still linger about the Saṃgha are frankly logistical: I felt it was beyond the limits of this already massive project to pursue more marginal cases like this, among which I would also rank the possibilities that a kind of Buddha-body status also accrues to *stūpa, caitya* and images in certain contexts. These topics will have to await future research, perhaps at some other hand.

To return, then, to the more limited case of the formula under examination here, which inspired these considerations, and especially to the case, which we now see to be very special, of the single instance of that formula that is associated with the term *dhammakāya,* it seems clear to me that were we to consider the notion of "sons of the Buddha, born of his breast, born of his mouth, born of the Dhamma, created by the Dhamma, heirs to the Dhamma" for its own

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[775] See further Appendix 4.

[776] Such a case of analogous terminology applied to both cases, but in reverse, might be seen (at a stretch) in the Senavarma Reliquary Inscription's description of the final body-cum-relic of the Buddha as a **vajrasaṃghana*.

intrinsic content, in isolation from the single case in which the term *dhammakāya* has been interpolated into a text right alongside it, there would be very little reason to regard this "Buddha's son" conceit as an antecedent to the notion of the *dharmakāya*. I therefore suggest that we abandon forthwith the illusion that it ever was such, and restrict our attention, for the purposes of examining the origins of that notion, to the remaining passages from the Pāli canon considered below.

Finally, before we close off our consideration of the full range of this formula in the Pāli canon and its implications, it seems worth reiterating the point that insofar as we have seen that its real emphasis lies in directions other than the consideration of the status of the Buddha himself, the fact that the sole instance of the term *dhammakāya* is found interpolated into a text where the focus is otherwise on the status of the Saṃgha, and is thus consistent with the larger pattern characterising the occurrence of this formula, is one more piece of evidence that the interpolated sentence containing the term *dhammakāya* is, in that context, merely an *ad hoc* formulation, and that we err if we ascribe to it too much doctrinal content or weight.

3.2.3 "Seeing the *dhamma* is seeing the Buddha"

Apart from the single passage in DN 27, examined above, in which the term *dhammakāya* actually occurs, perhaps the most famous and often-noted antecedent to the notion of the *dharmakāya* in the Pāli canon is found in the SN 22.87, the *Vakkali-sutta.*

The context seems to be one in which the focus is initially *not* so much on the Buddha as the teacher of the Dhamma, but on the Buddha as the giver of *darśan.* Vakkali, an ailing monk (who dies later in the same *sutta*) is too sick to go and see the Buddha, and so he sends his attendants to plead with the Buddha to come and see him. The Buddha does so. Vakkali says that his pain

is growing and that he fears he will not recover. The Buddha says that he hopes, then, that Vakkali is "not troubled by remorse or regret" as he approaches his end, but Vakkali says that he is. The Buddha ascertains that Vakkali has "nothing for which to reproach [him]self in regard to virtue",[777] and then asks why he could have any further cause for regret. Vakkali says that it is, effectively, because his illness has prevented him "taking *darśan*" of the Buddha. "For a long time, venerable sir, I have wanted to come and see the Blessed One, but I haven't been fit enough to do so."[778] To this the Buddha famously replies,

> "Enough, Vakkali! Why do you want to see this foul body (*pūtikāya*)? One who sees the Dhamma sees me; one who sees me sees the Dhamma. For in seeing the Dhamma, Vakkali, one sees me; and in seeing me, one sees the Dhamma."[779]

The Buddha then delivers to Vakkali a stereotyped discourse on the impermanence of the five *skandhas,* and the inappropriateness therefore of regarding them as "mine", "I", or "my self". Soon thereafter, Vakkali asks his attendants to take him away from among the houses to the Isigili Slope to die. During the night, the Buddha is approached by two "*devatās* of stunning beauty", who tell him that Vakkali is intent upon deliverance and that he will indeed be "liberated as one well liberated".[780] The Buddha sends monks to report this to Vakkali himself, with the assurance, "Do not be afraid! Your death will not be a bad one. Your demise will not be a bad one," and Vakkali sends homage in response, and declares that he has understood the lesson of impermanence and suffering and has "no more desire, lust or affection".[781] Vakkali then "uses the knife", i.e. dispatches himself by his own hand. The text ends with a passage we

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[777] Bodhi 938.

[778] Bodhi 939.

[779] Bodhi 939; Rhys Davids and Woodward, III, 103: *alaṃ vakkali. kiṃ te iminā pūtikāyena diṭṭhena, yo kho vakkali, dhammaṃ passati so maṃ passati, yo maṃ passati so dhammaṃ passati, dhammaṃ hi vakkali, passanto maṃ passati. maṃ passanto dhammaṃ passati.*

[780] Bodhi 939.

[781] Bodhi 940.

have already had occasion to mention briefly above, in the context of the discussion of undying as a characterisation of the religious ideal.[782] The Buddha and the monks go to the Isigili Slope, where they see the body of Vakkali, and above it they see a "cloud of smoke, a swirl of darkness", which the Buddha says is "Māra the Evil One, searching for the consciousness of the clansman Vakkali" and not finding it, as it is "unestablished".[783] The lesson, we take it, is that the Buddha's final sermon to Vakkali was effective; he did indeed understand fully its lesson of impermanence; and that, as a result, he was able to die a final death which escaped "Māra" and his snares of *saṃsāra,* i.e. did not incur further rebirth.

In considering this passage, we must note that, as with the "*dhammakāya* sentence" in DN 27 above, the key part of the text to hand is not paralleled in the Chinese Āgamas.[784] The version of the text found in T99, the *Saṃyuktâgama,* goes immediately from the Buddha's questions to Vakkali about his state of health and Vakkali's answers to the sermon. The version found in T125, the *Ekottarâgama,* while it clearly is based upon a general memory of the same narrative outline, varies greatly throughout in numerous narrative details from the Pāli version,[785] and in this version Vakkali and the Buddha never even come face to face, and Vakkali's desire to see the Buddha does not even feature in the story. The overall agreement in outline between all three versions of the text (that Vakkali only came to his liberating realisation on his very deathbed, that he "used the knife", that his spirit was sought but not found by Māra, etc.), and

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[782] See above, p. 199.

[783] Bodhi 941.

[784] For Chinese parallels to this text, see T99.346b06-347b14, T125.642b29.643a25.

[785] The text opens with Vakkali despondent and considering suicide, and even stabbing himself with a knife; he considers that he has been unable to reach the "other shore" in this life; he then reflects upon the teachings and "attains to *parinirvāṇa* in the **nirupadhiśeṣanirvāṇadhātu*" 於無餘涅槃界而般涅槃; the Buddha knows of what is going on through his power of clairaudience; the text presents the search of Māra for Vakkali's "consciousness/spirit" (神識) from a kind of "God's eye" perspective etc.

especially the agreement in other numerous details between the T99 and SN 22.87 versions, allows us to conclude that our extant Pāli text is a later stage of development from an earlier stage. In this earlier stage, the whole question of seeing the Buddha in his fleshly body or the Dhamma was not included, and that the passage that concerns us most here was presumably added at some later date. This on its own suggests that the notion of seeing the Buddha in seeing the Dhamma can only belong to a relatively later phase of the Pāli canon, as with the *dhammakāya* sentence itself, and therefore that we cannot go far wrong in treating these faint antecedents to the later notion of the *dharmakāya* in this chapter, as part of the later stages of the Pāli-canonical materials, and not in Chapter 2, where we treated materials that seem to go back as early as anything we can trace.

The key sentence in this text referring to "seeing the Dhamma" has been seen by some authors (including traditional authors) as affording kind of precedent or warrant for the notion of *dharmakāya.*[786] This is certainly justifiable to some extent. If one can "see" (or even "receive *darśan* from") the Buddha in "seeing the Dhamma", this certainly does suggest that the Dhamma is capable of serving one of the important functions of the living Buddha, and to that extent, that we could, loosely, consider the notion of Dhamma as Buddha here to fall within the broad ambit of conceptions of embodiment of the Buddha. Certainly, it is entirely consonant with later understandings of the *dharmakāya,* which is surely one reason why the later tradition picked it up so eagerly in elaborating that concept.

[786] I discuss this and other passages as possible antecedents to the notion of *dharmakāya* in the relevant section below.

We must note, however, that the passage does not, of course, actually contain the term *dhammakāya* itself at all (*pace* e.g. Guang Xing[787]). This means that if we bracket out the obviously interested claims of the later tradition about how we should read this passage (and where the notion of the *dharmakāya* came from), it actually has no stronger claim to be propounding a notion of the Buddha's embodiment than the "sons of the Buddha" passage examined above might hypothetically have to be advancing the claim that the Saṃgha is such an embodiment. As we saw in considering that formula, the "sons of the Buddha" conceit might be so interpreted on the basis of some functional equivalences between the Saṃgha and the Buddha, and the fact that the conceit employed has some explicit corporeal implications (progenesis is corporeal, they are "born of his breast and mouth"). Similarly, here, the Dhamma has some functional equivalence with the living Buddha (it liberates, and perhaps it can "give *darśan*"), and there is some slender grounds for seeing corporeal overtones in this equivalence because of the contrast the Buddha is made to draw between seeing the Dhamma and seeing "this foul body". The "sons of the Buddha" conceit, further, has in its favour, in this hypothetical comparison between claims to "Buddha-body" status, the fact that it is far more widely attested in the canon than the current conceit, which only occurs in the present passage, and that, as we see from the comparison with the Āgama versions, a passage that could well be a later insertion.

It has also been too little observed that to the extent that this passage *does* indeed support any contention that some later form of *dharmakāya* doctrine is foreshadowed here, it can only

[787] This passage is cited in Guang 72. In but one instance of a disregard for accuracy that is rife throughout his book (see my review in *NZJAS*), Guang inserts the term *dhammakāya* into this passage without any warrant whatsoever. He "translates" (to use that word loosely): "He who sees the Dhamma (*dhammakāyo*), Vakkali, sees me; he who sees me sees the Dhamma (*dhammakāyo*)" (72). Inexplicably, he makes this extremely misleading error despite the fact that he (unusually) cites the full original Pāli text in his fn. to the same sentence (n. 18, p. 207), where, of course, the word *dhammakāya* does not appear at all.

reasonably be upon one only of the later contesting interpretations of the *dharmakāya,* that is, where the Buddha is embodied in the *dharma* in a sense very close to *dharmatā*, the "real nature of things". Two main facts support this contention.

First, the text speaks, quite oddly, of "*seeing*" that Dhamma, not "hearing" it – a locution that is found only twice (here and in MN 28, which we will examine immediately below) in the entire Nikāya corpus. It would be a queer kind of synaesthesia, in an oral textual culture, if this somehow referred to the encounter with the Dhamma in the sense of "the teaching". This would seem to leave two other main candidates among the common later readings of the term *dharma-* as it enters into the notion of *dharmakāya*; the pure *buddhadharma* that make a Buddha what he is, and the "*dharmatā* interpretation". But there is no mention of anything approaching the *buddhadharma* anywhere in this text.

That it is in fact "the true nature of things" that is meant by this reference to "seeing the Dhamma" is supported by a second feature of the text, also, that is, by its narrative logic. The text opens with Vakkali sick and suffering, and wishing he could only get to see the Buddha one more time. The Buddha tells him that he is misguided in this desire, and redirects his attention to the realisation of the truth. Vakkali considers and understands what he is told, and as a result, attains the release that he begins the text yearning for. Now, it is true that the Buddha, in bringing about this happy ending, preaches a discourse about the Dhamma to Vakkali, and in that sense we could say that he substitutes the vision of his physical body with an encounter with the Dhamma as teaching. But in the overall narrative logic of the text, it is not the mere preaching of the discourse that effects the salvific function, but Vakkali's success in understanding and taking on board the realities to which that discourse points; and this is a much more comprehensible use of the conceit of "seeing".

This reading, whereby the *dhamma* that one sees to "see the Buddha" is the true reality of things, rather than either the teaching or the *buddhadharmas,* is further supported by the only (partial) parallel to this passage in the entire Pāli canon. MN 28, the *Mahāhatthipadopama-sutta,* is a complex discourse which elaborates an interlocking set of developed doctrinal rubrics, beginning with the Four Noble Truths, and then moving quickly to the five *skandhas;* the first *skandha,* i.e. the *rūpaskandha,* is then explained in terms of the four great elements (*mahābhūta*), and the exposition of these, in turn analysed as both "internal" (bodily) and "external", occupies the bulk of the text. The overall thrust of the discourse is to convince the listener of the fact of impermanence, undo clinging, and thereby bring about the cessation of suffering. Now, towards the very end of this complex discourse, the text states, by way of summary, "One who sees dependent origination sees the Dhamma; one who sees the Dhamma sees dependent origination."[788]

This phrase is also found exactly where we would expect it to be in the parallel text in T26, the *Madhyamâgama.*[789] We should not conclude too much too confidently on the basis of only one such parallel.[790] But the contrast is notable with the *Vakkali-sutta*, where, as we saw immediately above, the Chinese texts failed to provide parallels, and it seemed most likely that the passage about "seeing the Dhamma" had been inserted into the Pāli version of the text only at a later stage in its development. It is of course possible that in some cases, agreement like this between texts could be produced by borrowing between canons after their transmission

[788] *'yo paṭiccasamuppādaṃ passati. so dhammaṃ passati. yo dhammaṃ passati. so paṭiccasamuppādaṃ passatī'ti.* Ñāṇamoli 283.

[789] 世尊亦如是說。若見緣起便見法。若見法便見緣起; T26.467a09-10.

[790] Contrast, for example, the situation we encountered in considering the MPNS account of the creation and disposition of the Buddha's relics, where we had six parallel versions of the text in substantial agreement; see p. 494 above.

lineages diverged. However, the most likely explanation for the current parallel is that it was in the common ancestral version of both texts. Perhaps this means that, of the two versions of the formula, "seeing *pratītyasamutpāda* is seeing the Dhamma" is the older, though we really have very little to go on in making such a fine judgment about relative dating here.

In any case, it is clear that in this passage, "seeing the Dhamma" is seeing the reality of things to which the Dhamma points, and not simply encountering (i.e. hearing, or reflecting upon) the teachings. Recalling that this is the only even partial canonical parallel to the conceit of "seeing the Buddha in seeing the Dhamma" in the *Vakkali-sutta,* this seems to be further reason that we should interpret the *Vakkali* passage, too, to refer to seeing the *dhamma* in the sense of "the reality of things", and not to either the teaching or the *buddhadharmas.*

In sum, then, though the passage in the *Vakkali-sutta* that equates "seeing the Dhamma" with seeing the Buddha has been taken by both traditional and secondary scholars as an important precedent for the later notion of the *dharmakāya,* it seems that at least for the purposes of secondary analysis, whose primary duty is surely to accurately interpret texts in their own terms and discern historical patterns of doctrinal development, this claim has previously been considerably overstated. First, the only basis the passage gives for thinking that it is talking about the problematic of embodiment is the contrast the Buddha draws with "this foul body". Second, the passage is found only in the Pāli version of the parallel texts, which suggests it is a later insertion in one version only of the Ur-text, and thus relatively marginal even to this single context in which we find it; whatever concept it conveys, therefore, it would be difficult to claim it is an important concept to Pāli-canonical Buddhism as a whole. Finally, we have seen that even to the extent that as the passage can thus be regarded as a weak foreshadowing of the later concept of *dharmakāya,* the conceit of "seeing" the Dhamma, the narrative logic

whereby seeing this Dhamma liberates Vakkali, and the partial parallel to MN 28 all suggest that it can only foreshadow the notion of the *dharmakāya* in the sense that the Buddha is said to be identical to the true nature of things; it does not foreshadow an identification of the Buddha with the Dharma as teachings, nor with his *buddhadharmas*.

3.2.4 The *dhammavinaya* as teacher and refuge after the Buddha's passing

The *Mahāparinibbāna-sutta* includes a tradition in which the Buddha says that after his *parinirvāṇa,* the teaching and the monastic rule (*dhamma-vinaya*) will serve as teacher in his stead. This passage has also been taken by both traditional and secondary scholars as an antecedent to the later notion of *dharmakāya*.

The assurance concerned is among the last utterances of the Buddha:

> "And the Lord said to Ānanda: 'Ānanda, it may be that you will think: "The Teacher's instruction has ceased, now we have no teacher!" It should not be seen like this, Ānanda, for what I have taught and explained to you as Dhamma and discipline will, at my passing, be your teacher."[791]

This passage seems to be without parallel in the Pāli canon. It forms part of a section of the MPNS which Bareau informs us is identical in all six versions of the text,[792] and would thus, on the arguments advanced by Bareau about relative dating of portions of this complex stratified text that we are following here, probably date to some time before the Aśokan dispersion at latest.[793]

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[791] Walshe 269-270. *atha kho bhagavā āyasmantaṃ ānandaṃ āmantesi. siyā kho panānanda tumhākaṃ evamassa, atītasatthukaṃ pāvacanaṃ, natthi no satthāti. na kho panetaṃ ānanda evaṃ daṭṭhabbaṃ. yo kho ānanda mayā dhammo ca vinayo ca desito paññatto so vo mamaccayena satthā ti.*

[792] Bareau, "Formation" 66. This passsage forms part of the group of material Bareau describes as "7) Le Buddha addresse ses derniers conseils à ses moines".

[793] See above. p. 497.

It is certainly true that this passage claims that the *dhamma-vinaya* is functionally equivalent to the living Buddha in one respect, that is, it can act in his stead as teacher. It is also true that the Dhamma (usually without any explicit mention of the Vinaya), in the sense of "the teaching", is one of the kinds of *dharma* to which the Buddha is equated in later *dharmakāya* doctrine. To this extent, then, the tradition at least did no violence either to this passage nor to the concept of *dharmakāya* in identifying the former as a precedent for the latter. Once more, however, it is striking, if anything, how thin the materials were that the tradition had to work with, that this passage formed one of the major scriptural supports and warrants for the later doctrine. There is nothing here that suggests any corporeal conceit at all. There is, moreover, nothing that says that the teaching "is", in any sense, the Buddha, or equivalent to him. The very partial functional equivalence between the *dhamma-vinaya* and the Buddha is the only basis upon which this passage could be adduced as connected to the later doctrine of *dharmakāya* at all.

Now, we of course have no reason to impugn authors in the later tradition who found in this passage some shred of scriptural authority to underwrite the concept of *dharmakāya*; it serves that end perfectly well, and the accurate exegesis of the passage in its own terms was not their primary concern. But however justified they were, in their own terms, in adducing this passage to warrant the notion of *dharmakāya,* we are not justified in following them and simply taking their word for it that this is indeed one of the sources of the concept, and that the concept is somehow present in this passage. It seems clear to me, rather, that in fact, this passage is of very marginal relevance to the history of Buddha-body doctrine, except for the fact that it was creatively reinterpreted by later exegetes to warrant a notion of embodiment that originally found no place in it.

3.2.5 Conclusion: There is no real **dharmakāya* in the Pāli canon

We have just seen that the MPNS passage stating that the *dhamma-vinaya* will be teacher to the Saṃgha after the Buddha's passing is, of all the slender evidence we have surveyed for prolepses of the *dharmakāya* in the Pāli canon, the slenderest of all, with only a very tenuous and retrospectively constructed connection to the concept of *dhammakāya/dharmakāya* at all. Even if we allow that this passage is, however, in some degree, a foreshadowing of the later notion of *dharmakāya* as it identified the Buddha with the Dharma *as teaching* (*deśanādharma*), we should be careful to note that it is, in that degree, in fact not consistent with the notion found in the *Vakkali-sutta* that "seeing the Dhamma is seeing the Buddha" as an antecedent for the notion of *dharmakāya*. As we saw above, the *Vakkali-sutta* passage seems rather to be referring to Dhamma in the sense of "the reality of things", for several reasons: this Dhamma is "seen", not heard; seeing it actually leads to full liberation for Vakkali; and the only other partial parallel to this formula, in MN 28, identifies the Dhamma with *paticcasamuppāda*. These two passages do not refer to "the same thing".

Indeed, there may be no "same thing" for them to refer to. Previous scholarship has tended to be led by the nose by the claims of exegetes in the tradition, who followed very different agendas, and thus to lump both passages in together as antecedents for "the" concept of *dharmakāya*. In this, these two passages were joined, in what amounts to rather a conceptually motley collection of odds and ends, by the "*dhammakāya* sentence" from DN 27. We have seen above, however, that this sentence was probably inserted later into the Pāli version of this text, into a context where it initially had no particular natural place. I argued further that the most plausible reconstruction of the reason for its interpolation is that it was part of an *ad hoc* addition to the argument, in which the term *dhammakāya* was coined on the fly as a stopgap to buttress what seems for some reason to have been felt to be a potential weakness in the

argument. Certainly, on the basis of the evidence we have, this is a more plausible assumption than the entirely unwarranted speculation that the term *dhammakāya* was borrowed here from some other, unknown context, or that, if it was, the unknown content ascribed to it in that unknown context somehow just happened to accord with interpretations only known to us anachronistically from later in the record.

In sum, this means that the only evidence for "the *dhammakāya/dharmakāya*", in the later senses ascribed to that term, in the Pāli canon, amounts to: (1) the presence of the term in a single, apparently *ad hoc* interpolation into a text not primarily concerned with the status of the Buddha at all, where the actual meaning of the term is difficult to determine but most likely not especially close to any of the later meanings of the term; (2) an assertion, similarly only attested once and similarly seemingly interpolated into a context where it may originally have been found, that one obtains real *darśan* of the Buddha in "seeing" the Dhamma, seemingly meaning "the real nature of things", where there is no real reason to imagine that this assertion involves any corporeal conceit; (3) an assertion, likewise only attested once, that the *dhamma-vinaya* will serve as teacher to the Saṃgha after the Buddha's passing, where Dhamma seems to have the different meaning of "the teaching", in which the *dhamma-vinaya* is neither explicitly identified with the Buddha, nor is any language suggesting a corporeal conceit used. I contend that it is unjustified for us to assume, on the basis of such slender evidence, that "the" notion of the *dhammakāya/dharmakāya,* meaning any of the senses in which this word was understood in the later tradition, was known to the Pāli-canonical tradition at all. This contention may be summarised by saying "There is no **dharmakāya*[794] in the Pāli canon." The

[794] My use of the Sanskrit rather than the Pāli here is deliberately anachronistic, and intended to point up the anachronism in the assumption to date that something compatible with the later usages *is* to be found in the Pāli materials; I have emphasised this by adding the asterisk, usually used to denote a hypothetical or false form. Of course, the later concept of *dharmakāya* is also found in Pāli materials, including the *Milindapañha,* in senses entirely compatible with at least some of the senses attested in

notion that there is such a thing is a plain illusion – the supposed "Pāli-canonical *dhammakāya*" is a phantom that has been conjured in the secondary scholarship by too much implicit trust in the tradition as a guide, which has led scholars to lump together these pieces of evidence as if they constitute a pattern showing that the later concepts (which are in fact plural) are more strongly foreshadowed in the Pāli materials than is in fact the case.

This means, of course, that none of the Buddha's later special *kāya* are really attested in the Pāli canon. We will return to this and other more general implications of these findings about the paucity of precedent for the *dharmakāya* in the Pāli materials in the general conclusion to this chapter. For the moment, we will end this section of this dissertation by taking a quick look at another "phantom body" of the Buddha that was identified in the prior literature – the *pūtikāya.*

3.2.6 La Vallée Poussin's supposed opposition between *dhammakāya* and *pūtikāya*: ["the"] *Pūtikāya* is not a special body of the Buddha

We saw above that in DN 27, the *Vakkali-sutta,* the Buddha says,

> "Enough, Vakkali! Why do you want to see this foul body (*pūtikāya*)? One who sees the Dhamma sees me; one who sees me sees the Dhamma. For in seeing the Dhamma, Vakkali, one sees me; and in seeing me, one sees the Dhamma."[795]

Seemingly on the strength of this passage alone, no less a doyen than the great la Vallée Poussin was moved to claim that the *pūtikāya,* which he identified with a **caturmahābhūtikakāya,* is one of three bodies ascribed to the Buddha in the Pāli materials[796] – the others being,

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Sanskrit and Chinese Mahāyāna or "schools" materials, and I do not mean, by using this Sanskrit form as a shorthand for this anachronism, to imply that the Pāli term never assumes some of those senses.

[795] Bodhi 939. For Pāli see n. 779.

[796] "Les Nikāyas ne formulent pas explicitement une théorie des trois corps: mais ils distinguent trois corps, le *caturmahābhūtikakāya,* le *manomayakāya,* le *dharmakāya.* Le premier, formé des quartre éléments, terre eau, feu, vent, est corruptible, *pūtikāya.* C'est le corps que Śākyamouni a pris dans le sein de Māyā, un corps *jarāyuja*;" "Appendice" 764. There is nothing in the *Vakkali* passage – as we have seen, the only passage that describes the body of the Buddha as *pūtikāya* (which, as we shall see immediately below, is a

according to him, *manomayakāya*[797] and *dhammakāya*[798] – and thereby to suggest that there was quite a significant precedent in the Pāli materials for the much later "three body" theory.[799]

Strictly speaking, of course, it is true that this passage does indeed predicate a *pūtikāya* of the Buddha, and therefore, if we like, that "the Buddha has" "a" *pūtikāya* in the Pāli canon. But the idea that *pūtikāya* is a technical term for a body of the Buddha in opposition to other bodies, and therefore part of a coherent overall theory of the Buddha's various embodiments and their interrelations, as is surely implied by la Vallée Poussin's treatment in the context of a study of "les corps du Buddha", is simply a trick of perspective produced by the failure, once more, to properly contextualise this passage.

When we examine the use of the term *pūtikāya* throughout the Pāli canon, we see, in fact, that: (1) The word itself is actually relatively rare, and only appears in approximately a dozen passages in the Pāli Nikāyas. (2) It is actually exceptional, not typical, for it to be predicated of the Buddha himself.[800] (3) It is not actually a technical term for a *type* of body, but rather, a

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more accurate way of characterising the situation than to say that it "ascribes *a pūtikāya* to him") to indicate that it is identified with any other way of describing the Buddha's body, and la Vallée Poussin's suggestion that this characterisation is to be coordinated with a **caturmahābhūtikakāya* is entirely speculative. Still less, as we have seen, is there any reason to think that the *pūtikāya* is understood as coordinated with the *manomayakāya* (which is also not particularly a body *of the Buddha*) or the *dhammakāya.*

797 "Appendice" 764-765.

798 "Appendice" 765-766.

799 Lewis Lancaster is equally mistaken when he likewise identifies *dharmakāya, pūtikāya* and *manomayakāya* as "the primitive triad", Lancaster diss. 92. Lancaster seemingly arrives at this notion independent of la Vallée Poussin; at least, he does not reference the latter.

800 This fact was striking enough for Pande to consider it an anomaly, and on its basis alone, to argue that the text must in fact be early and contain a reminiscence of a genuine utterance of the Buddha (ignoring the fact that, as we saw above, the utterance is not paralleled in the Chinese Āgamas): "A latter-day writer would hardly dare" to use this term of the Buddha, so that it must contain some "actual recollection", Pande 212.

simple modifier-headword compound that describes the ordinary given physical body, much as we saw is also the case with *oḷārikakāya* above.[801] Aside from the single case of the *Vakkali-sutta* passage, in fact, the only use of the term is in contexts encouraging or celebrating the extirpation of sensual desire by the reviling of the flesh, that is, something broadly in line with the "contemplation of the repulsive" that we have already seen above was a strand in the broader theme of the rejection of the given physical body in the Pāli materials.[802]

Thus, in MN 82, *Raṭṭhapāla-sutta,* paralleled in the Therāgāthā, Raṭṭhapāla is tempted by his former wives, but he is steadfast in the face of this temptation. On this occasion, he pronounces some verses characterising the tempting body of a beautiful woman as a "pranked-out puppet shape, a mass of sores, a congeries, afflicted, much thought of" etc., and among these verses says, "Like a new collyrium-box, embossed, is the foul body (*pūtikāya*), adorned -/enough for the delusion of a fool, but not for the quester of the Beyond."[803]

Similarly, SN 5.4, "Vijayā", paralleled in the Therīgāthā, tells the story of the temptation of Sister Vijayā by Māra. She rebuffs him with this verse:

> I am repelled and humiliated
> By this foul, putrid body (*pūtikāya*),
> Subject to break up, fragile:
> I've uprooted sensual craving.[804]

In like vein, in Therīgāthā v. 466-467, Sumedhā says:

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[801] See p. 247.

[802] See p. 154.

[803] Horner, II, 258; see too Ñāṇamoli 684: *añjanīva navā cittā pūtikāyo alaṅkato/ alaṃ bālassa mohāya no ca pāragavesino.* ThaG 769-793, Raṭṭhapāla, tells the same story seen above at MN 82, with a virtually identical verse (v. 773); Norman, *Elders' Verses* I, 75.

[804] Bodhi, 224, Rhys Davids and Woodward, I, 164: *iminā pūtikāyena bhindanena pabhaṅgunā/ aṭṭīyāmi harāyāmi kāmataṇhā samūhatā.* ThiG 140, "Khemā", corresponds verbatim.

> "Why should I cling to this foul body (*pūtikāya*), impure, smelling of urine, a frightful water-bag of corpses, always flowing, full of impure things?"[805]

She continues in this vein to revile the body, which is repulsive, destined for the cemetery, thence to be eaten, so impure one's own parents will be disgusted by it and feel the need for purification;

> "They are attached to the unsubstantial body, an aggregate of bones and sinews, to the foul body (*pūtikāya*), full of saliva, tears, excrement and urine."[806]

Likewise, Theragāthā v. 567-576, "Kappa", is a declaration of the worthlessness of the body and Kappa's disgust at it, and v. 569 reads:

> "Having a binding of sixty tendons, plastered with fleshy plaster, girt with a jacket of skin, the foul body is worthless."[807]

Purity of mind from worldly concerns is associated with this same attitude towards the body in a different way in AN 9.3.28, "After the Rainy Season". Sāriputta explains the fact that he has set out on a journey without apologising to a fellow "wayfarer" for an offence by saying that he is not at all mindful of the body's actions. Sāriputta himself is as indifferent as earth, water, fire, wind, a duster, a scavenger boy etc. to supposed defilements and impurities, and thus he thinks little of the possibility of giving offence to others. In the course of this explanation, he says,

> "Lord, just as a man, woman or a lad, having washed the head and dressed up, would be filled with horror, loathing and disgust, if the carcase of a snake, dog or human being were slung around his neck; even so, lord, am I filled with horror, loathing and disgust at this foul body (*pūtikāya*) of mine . . . . Lord, just as a man might carry around a bowl of fat, full of holes and slits, oozing, dripping; even so, lord, I carry around this body of mine, full of holes and slits, oozing, dripping."[808]

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[805] Norman II, 46: *kim iva pūtikāyam asuciṃ/ savanagandhaṃ bhayānakaṃ kuṇapaṃ/ abhisaṃviseyyaṃ bhastaṃ/ asakiṃ paggharaṇaṃ asucipuṇṇaṃ.*

[806] Norman II, 46: *ajjhositā asāre/ kalebare aṭṭhinahārusaṅghāte/ khelassuccārapassava/ paripuṇṇe pūtikāyam hi.*

[807] Norman, Elders' Verses I 57: *saṭṭhikaṇḍarasambandho maṃsalepanalepito/ cammakañcukasannaddho pūtikāyo niratthako.*

[808] Woodward and Hare IV, 251: *seyyathāpi bhante itthi vā puriso vā daharo vā yuvā vā maṇḍanaka jātiko sīsaṃ nahāto ahikuṇapena vā kukkurakuṇapena vā manussakuṇapena vā kaṇṭhe āsattena aṭṭīyeyya, harāyeyya jigucceyya. evameva kho ahaṃ bhante iminā pūtikāyena aṭṭiyāmi harāyāmi jigucchāmi . . . . seyyathāpi bhante puriso medakathālikaṃ parihareyya chiddaṃ vicchiddaṃ1 uggharantaṃ paggharantaṃ. evameva kho ahaṃ bhante imaṃ kāyaṃ pariharāmi.*

In AN 3.2.105, "The Peak", the emphasis is rather on a reverse causality, where a failure to be circumspect in thought will *produce* impurity of the body (along with speech and mind). Anāthapiṇḍika is told that when thought is unguarded, bodily action, speech and mental action will be unguarded; so each will be saturated with lust (*kāyakammampi avassutaṃ hoti, vacīkammampi avassutaṃ hoti, manokammampi avassutaṃ hoti*); and when saturated with lust they are each rotten (*kāyakammampi pūtiyaṃ hoti, vacīkammampi pūtiyaṃ hoti, manokammampi pūtiyaṃ hoti*); "when they are rotten (*pūtikāyakammantassa pūtivacīkammantassa pūtimanokammantassa*) one's death is not auspicious, one has no happy ending."[809]

This quick survey of the use of the term *pūtikāya* elsewhere in the Pāli canon shows clearly, first, that it does *not* denote a special "kind" of body, but rather, is merely a way of describing the despicable impurity of the given physical body as it is perceived by the right-minded; and second, that the *Vakkali-sutta* is the only place in the entire canon where it is predicated of the Buddha himself, so that it is ludicrous to suggest that the term is somehow part of any systematic attempt to think through multiple possibilities for his embodiment. In fact, the primary lesson that emerges from the attempt to consider the *Vakkali-sutta*'s use of the term in the broader context of its patterns of usage across the canon is that this is yet another respect in which the *Vakkali-sutta* passage that identifies seeing the Dhamma with seeing the Buddha is, from the perspective of the Pāli canon as a whole, anything but representative, but rather, idiosyncratic and, once more, seemingly somewhat *ad hoc*.

[809] Woodward and Hare I, 240. This passage is repeated verbatim several times as a refrain.

Chapter 3.3 Conclusions: Anticipation of the notion that the Buddha has special embodiments in the late Pāli-canonical period

In this chapter, we have studied the materials that I see as pointing to the first emergence of ideas about special embodiments of the Buddha in the later Pāli-canonical period.

Against the faulty interpretations of a very slender body of evidence by scholars in the field to date, upon the basis of which it has usually been assumed that the concept of *dhammakāya/dharmakāya* is already present in this period, I have argued that there is nothing in the few pieces of evidence usually adduced in support of this claim that really attests to anything like the later concept(s), and therefore, that we must seek for the true origins of the notion of the *dharmakāya* in later materials. Recall that in Chapter 2 of this dissertation, I also argued that an open-eyed examination of the full-range of Pāli-canonical materials about the *manomayakāya* shows that it is erroneous to speak of *manomayakāya,* too, as a special body of the Buddha. In the present chapter, finally, I also showed in passing that another minor possible candidate for that status, la Vallée Poussin's *pūtikāya,* is not in fact special to the Buddha, not in fact a special *kind* of body at all. This means that all the traditional candidates for the title of "Buddha body" in the Pāli canon do not stand up to scrutiny, and the field is clear for us to search anew for the actual first signs of special Buddha bodies in the early period.

The primary concern of the present chapter was to claim that the first sign of ideas that the Buddha has special bodies is found in the doctrine of the "body of marks", but that the body of marks is more properly a body of the *bodhisattva* than the Buddha. This means that we do not

find ideas of true special bodies of the Buddha *per se* until the period following the Pāli-canonical period.

I showed that while it is certainly the case that parts of the doctrine of the body of marks are presented in the Buddhist materials as Brahminical, there is no extra-canonical evidence (that I have been able to find) to support this idea, and further, that the bulk of the materials in the canon itself in fact suggest that a corporeal understanding of the idea of the *mahāpuruṣa* is most central to Buddhism itself, and the so-called "ethical" idea only secondary. On this basis, I argued that it is most plausible to think of this idea about the Buddha's body as a home-grown Buddhist conception that is corporeal in its primary emphasis. These facts alone make the idea of the "body of marks", as I have called it here, the first conception of a truly positive possibility of embodiment, on the one hand, and also the first partial conception of a special mode of embodiment peculiar to the Buddha, on the other.

However, I also argued that the "body of marks" falls short of qualifying as a true "special Buddha body" on several scores. First, it is not spoken of as a special kind of body. Second, it is more characteristic of the *bodhisattva* who was to become the Buddha than it is of the Buddha as such, that is, after his awakening. Third, it does not fulfil any of the functions of the living Tathāgata by proxy in situations where he would be otherwise absent. For these reasons, I suggested, it is best to regard the body of marks as a very significant step towards the development of the idea of a full-fledged special Buddha body, but not as itself representing such a mode of embodiment.

Against this background, I will argue in the next chapter that the relics of the Buddha are, in fact, the earliest fully fledged special embodiment of the Buddha that emerge in our record, as evidenced by inscriptional evidence from around the turn of the Common Era.

Thus, the supposed Pāli-canonical *dhammakāya* is thus a mere phantom conjured by the combination of latter-day exegetical creativity and the credulity of secondary scholars in the fact of its products; and therefore, the earliest form in which we see an anticipation of the idea of a special body of the Buddha is in the partial prolepsis comprised by the body of marks. The fully fledged notion of a special body of the Buddha does not emerge until the relics are so considered, as we shall see in the next chapter.

In the next chapter of this dissertation, by contrast, we will examine a set of phenomena which, between them, amount to no less than a veritable explosion of overt practical and doctrinal speculation and creativity around the idea of the Buddha's embodiments and what makes them special. Here, for the first time, also, these special modes of embodiment are called overtly by the names of special *kāya*, and these *kāya* are quasi-systematically related to one another. The epoch-making developments in the history of conceptions of embodiment in Buddhism witnessed in this era, I will argue, must be understood in significant part as an outgrowth of ideas about relics and a reaction to them in the earlier post-Pāli-canonical period. We will endeavour to keep this fact in view as we set about analysing the emergence of special bodies of the Buddha and *buddhakāya* discourse in the early Common Era.

Chapter 3.4 Appendix to Chapter Three: *saupādisesa*-[810] and *anupādisesa* in the Pāli canon

> "Just as a dragon-king stays long in the great sea, building up strength and power, and then rises into the air, casting a great veil of clouds over the entire sky, and lets flash the lightning and lets roll the vast sound of thunder to tell all the world, 'I am about to pour down my rains!' . . . . in just this way, the World-Honoured One, in his past [existences as] Śākyamuni [Bodhisattva], through all the ages of Indradhvaja, Ratnacūḍa, Dīpāṃkara, Vipaśyin, etc., down finally to Kaśyapa Buddha, built up his provisions (*saṃbhāra*) of merit and wisdom; then [He] rose into the sky of the realm of *nirvāṇa* with a remainder of support (*sôpadhiśeṣanirvāṇadhātu*), casting the clouds of his great compassion over the entire world; and he let flash the lightning of his peerless wisdom to illuminate all things, and let roll the thunder that proclaims emptiness, non-self and the vanquishing of fear to declare to [beings,] 'I proclaim the gem of the Dharma in brief and in detail! . . .'."
>
> --- **Mahāvibhāṣā,* Xuanzang trans.[811]

We will see later in this study that as it was discussed for example in the **Mahāvibhāṣā,* the concept of "Nirvāṇa with remainder" (Skt. *sôpadhiśeṣanirvāṇa*)[812] was to emerge as yet another way that Buddhism conceived of and discussed the (ordinary, given, physical) body of an enlightened being. For this reason, it is important that we cover it in the context of this general study of concepts of embodiment in Buddhism. Moreover, antecedents to the concept, as it is later related to ideas about the physical body, already exist in the Pāli canon, where we find quite numerous references to *anupādisesa* or cognates and related concepts, and less but still numerous references to *saupādisesa* (var. *sopādisesa, savupādisesa*) and cognates. This would seem to necessitate that these two concepts be included in our survey of doctrines related to embodiment in the Pāli materials, and yet this apparent requirement places us in an awkward bind, since both concepts are at best only very marginally related to the problem of

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[810] It is usual in secondary scholarship to use *sopādisesa* as the standard term. However, *saupādisesa* is more frequent in the primary texts (*sopādisesa* only occurring in one text, AN 9.2.12, the *Sopādisesa-sutta,* and it seems therefore more appropriate to use *saupādisesa* as the general term.

[811] T1545.366b23-c09. Note that this passage differs somewhat from the earlier Saṃghabhūti version, which does not use the term *sôpadhiśeṣanirvāṇadhātu;* see below p. 940. The list of past Buddhas given here also seems to be unique, but since it is incidental to the point for which I cite the passage here, I have not pursued this problem.

[812] My reasons for omitting the Pāli here should become clear presently, in the course of the study of Pāli antecedents to this notion that constitutes the current section.

embodiment at all in the Pāli materials. What seems to have happened in Buddhist doctrinal history is that a pair of concepts that initially had quite a different meaning gradually changed until they were primarily interpreted as referring to different states of embodiment. In order that those later developments will be properly comprehensible, it is therefore necessary for us to study here, in the context of our survey of Pāli-canonical ideas, the notions of *saupādisesa* and *anupādisesa* as they are found there, though in a sense this study is slightly out of place in the current context, because those notions bear so slightly on embodiment when considered in their own terms and outside their historical connection to later corporeal interpretations of them.

The analysis presented in the following discussion is closest to that of the excellent study by Miyamoto Shōson,[813] who anticipated many of the main results of my own study of the primary

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[813] Other secondary studies include those by Watanabe and Hayashi; Fujita Kōtatsu's "*Nibbāna* to *parinibbāna*", esp. 7-10; Bhattacharya's study of the term *upādi* and related terms; and Ui Hakuju, *Indo testugaku kenkyū* vol. 2, 233-260. See also la Vallée Poussin, *Nirvâṇa* 168- 180; Welbon, *Buddhist Nirvāṇa and its Western Interpreters,* 209-220. Though these studies contain some useful points, I have found most of them, on the whole, more of a hindrance than a help in understanding the Pāli materials.

I discuss the reasons why I feel myself largely unable to follow Watanabe below, n. 872.

Hayashi is of little use for the study of the doctrine in the Pāli materials. He takes Iti 44 as representative of the Pāli literature, and further reads it through the Chinese canonical equivalent; he reads other canonical passages through later commentary as if the commentary is merely a transparent and authoritative gloss; and he reads the concepts under study in general through the lens of the later doctrine that it is precisely our concern to differentiate from the Pāli understanding here.

Fujita also suffers from a perspective that focuses excessively on Iti 44 (and its Chinese Āgama parallels), and seemingly for this reason, does not take adequately into account the many passages in which different understandings of each and related concepts feature in the Pāli canon. He also subsumes Iti 44 to the norm of the later "corporeal" reading in a way that ignores its peculiarities even in terms of the later doctrine (particularly the association of *sopādisesa* with *diṭṭheva dhamme*, for which see below), and anachronistically adduces commentaries to buttress this reading, in particular for the dubious argument that the term *upādi* here refers somehow to the five *khandhas* as in the corporeal interpretation (this despite the fact that Fujita himself notes how difficult it is to support this reading of *upādi* from the Pāli canon); 7-8. Finally, I disagree with Fujita because he follows Miyamoto in precisely the point on which I disagree with the latter, *viz.* the conjecture that the notion of *anupādisesanibbānadhātu* forms a pivotal step in the development of these doctrines as a whole, and more specifically that this concept springs from a felt need to give some positive expression to the state of a person who attains *nibbāna* after that person's final physical death; 8-9. For my reasons for disagreeing with this argument at its source in Miyamoto, see below, p. 415 ff.

Kamaleswar Bhattacharya's related study of the term *upādi-* in its relation to Pāli *upadhi* and *upādāna* is useful for the relatively accurate account it gives of the meaning of these terms, but overall it

is flawed by the fact that he still assumes the later "corporeal" reading of the terms, in the face of all the evidence; see esp. 92-93.

Ui Hakuju's treatment is complex and often insightful, especially considering the era and context in which it was written. Ui perceives accurately that the later "corporeal" reading of the terms under study is radically different to their usual meaning in early texts, 253; he accurately identifies the actual meaning of *upādi-* in the Pāli materials, 254-256; and, to these ends, he offers a particularly insightful reading of the Vaṇgīsa story from Iti 96, 237-238. Ui also has the virtue of attempting to account for the remarkable shift in the meaning of these terms by means of a study intended as based in historical principle.

Despite these partial strengths, however, Ui's account of the development of these concepts is unreliable and unconvincing for a number of reasons. Generally speaking, it is undermined by an excess of speculation; by disregard of much important evidence; by an apparent tendency to read the Pāli texts through the lens of the Chinese Āgamas (see e.g. 241); by bald claims of relative dating among Pāli materials which are unsupported by any evidence, and which seem likely to be partly subjective, speculative, and theological; and by an avowed intent, difficult to realise, to recover the original teaching of the Buddha, and the attendant assumption of more than the texts seem to warrant about the characteristics of that teaching. Specifically, we can summarise Ui's large narrative, and note where it falls down, as follows. Ui argues that the "original" *nirvāṇa* was only one, to be realised in the here-and-now, and that the notion of "two kinds" of *nirvāṇa* is therefore later; 234-238. This much seems unobjectionable. Ui further proposes, however, a complex theory of the process that led from the earlier meaning to the later, in the following stages:

(1) In the pristine state of the teachings, full realisation is opposed to a state of "non-returning" (as per the formula *diṭṭheva dhamme aññā, sati vā . . .* for which see below), but *both* are understood within this life, and "non-returning" means merely "not backsliding to the state of an ordinary *pṛthagjana*; 241, 245-246. The doctrine of "non-returning" so defined, further, was a sop to weaker practitioners to prevent them from despairing or suspecting their inferior practice futile; 239-240. This reading fails entirely to account for the meaning or use of the phrase *diṭṭhe dhamme* in opposition to the state of the non-returner so-defined, and seems based, rather, on a doctrinaire, apologetic-rationalist assumption that the Buddha posited nothing firm about life after death (Ui even explicitly asserts this, 245), but rather understood death in suspiciously modern and materialist-sounding terms. The psychologistic suggestion that this doctrine was a response to the insecurities of lesser adherents, further, is entirely speculative.

(2) Where the *tridhātu* schema was originally a mere "postulate" (Ui uses the English term, transliterated in *kana*) in the Buddha's true teachings, and only interpreted cosmologically by other schools, the cosmological reading seeped into Buddhism itself; 245. This led to a reinterpretation of the notion of Non-Returning such that it meant "not being reborn into this world (the *kāmadhātu*)". Somehow (Ui does not explain this link in his argument), with this change, the state of the Non-Returner came to be understood positively, with reference to a certainty of eventual *parinibbāna,* instead of negatively, with reference to the guarantee against return to the state of the unimproved worldling. In making this argument, Ui seems to assume rather than explain the development of the fivefold subdivision of the category of Non-Returner, since it is the only evidence he gives to show that the term has indeed taken on a cosmological meaning that refers to post-mortem states, 244; this is despite the apparently inconsistent fact that in a later summary of his chronology, he explicitly places the fivefold typology later than the "four fruits of monastic practice" (see (4) below). Even the claim that *parinibbāyin,* used of the five kinds of Non-Returner, refers to death, is itself problematic; Ui's argument here can make no sense of e.g. the notion of the *anantaraparinibbāyin* (he specifically discusses this claim with reference to the fivefold typology of Non-Returner, for which see below), who is supposed to attain *parinibbāna* from the state *between* rebirths; what could it mean to "die" from a state in which one has already died and is yet to be reborn?

(3) (Only) with this putative shift, the term *parinibbāna* thus came to refer to death, initially the future final death of the Non-Returner; 244, 251. The notion of *sopādisesa,* "with a vestige of clinging", had come to be understood primarily with reference to post-mortem destinies; for Ui, this shift was the determining factor in the application of the term *parinibbāna,* which originally referred only to the one *nibbāna* possible (in this world), also to the moment of physical death of those totally enlightened *in this*

sources below, and to whom my analysis is also indebted on a number of points. Miyamoto has perceived most clearly the fact that the usual Pāli-canonical usage of both terms is entirely different from the later interpretation (I will consistently refer to this later interpretation below as "corporeal", in reference to the fact that it interprets in terms of a relation to a certain mode of embodiment) and described its actual meaning. However, the study below was also worth undertaking because its emphasis differs from that of Miyamoto. Miyamoto is primarily interested in locating the origin of the rubric of the "four fruits",[814] and does not pursue his analysis far beyond that. I have rather primarily attempted to determine how much precedent exists, and when and where, for the later "corporeal" reading of *sôpadhiśeṣa* and *nirupadhiśeṣa,* and for that reason my survey of the Pāli material stops at showing that the Pāli version of

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life, and the state that death inaugurates; 244. Ui claims that this is the origin of the formula *anupādisesāya nibbānadhātuyā parinibbāyati* (for which see below, p. 413 ff.), frequently applied to the final physical death of the Buddha and other enlightened beings, and also to the eventually standard use of the word *parinirvāṇa* to refer specifically to the physical death of the Buddha.

(4) With these shifts, both members of the original twofold typology of spiritual achievement, viz. full *nirvāṇa* and the presence of some remainder, had been shifted permanently to future existences and moreover rendered more exalted than they were originally; once more, then, a gap yawned between these possible felicities and any state ordinary practitioners were presently in or could realistically envisage achieving. This gap was filled by the elaboration of the further categories of Stream-Enterer and Once-Returner, leading to the full fourfold typology of "fruits of monastic practice" (*śrāmaṇyaphala*); 247-248. Ui argues that various lingering inconsistencies in the mapping of members of this typology onto schema of fetters and "poisons" (*doṣa*) are evidence of the *ad hoc* and only partially successful nature of this solution; 248-250.

(5) Because, so long as we understand *upādi-* to mean "clinging", the term **anupādisesanibbāna* is redundant and the term **saupādisesanibbāna* oxymoronic, the meaning of *upādi-/upadhi* shifted to "body"; 252-253. Here, Ui can only explain the reasons why the term could no longer be understood in its old sense; he offers no real reasons that it had to assume the particularly corporeal reading it did, among all the meanings that presumably would have been hypothetically available.

In sum, this complex theory advanced by Ui takes for its starting point a speculative construction of "original" Buddhist doctrine that has slender support (if any) in the texts, and seems to owe more rather to agendas of modernist apologetics. At key junctures in the argument, further, the motive forces to which Ui turns for explanation are similarly speculative and grounded in dubious assumptions: the inadequacy and need for psychological crutches of lesser practitioners, and the invasion of rationalist Buddhism by superstitious, literalist cosmological readings of originally theoretical "postulates". Despite Ui's exaggerated rhetoric about having shown "almost beyond doubt" (殆ど疑ないほど明となった, 258) a logic of development in which all the odd vicissitudes of these terms are explained, moreover, key points remain obscure: particularly the supposed initial shift of "with remainder" from a worldly reference to non-backsliding to the description of post-mortem destiny, and the accompanying shift in meaning of *parinibbāna* to mean "death"; and the particular choice of the meaning "body" for *upādi-* when the old meaning of "attachment" became untenable.

[814] Arhat, Non-Returner, Once-Returner, Stream-Enterer. See n. 897 below.

these concepts is very different from the corporeal interpretation. My analysis further differs significantly from Miyamoto's on a number of significant points.[815]

In what follows, then, I will examine one by one a series of concepts that together constitute the overall matrix of ideas within which the terms *saupādisesa-* and *anupādisesa* had their various meanings in the Pāli material, and try to reconstruct part of the process by which their meaning changed over time.

I should warn the reader at once that the study of these concepts is a particularly complex problem.[816] For this reason, I will not pretend my account can account for all the various strange developments in their history.[817] My focus is rather on showing that the dominant meaning of these terms in the Pāli canon was not in line with the later "corporeal" reading. I also attempt to lay out all the various sets of related ideas that might have prepared the ground

[815] Most particularly in the place I understand *anupādāparinibbāna* and *anupādisesaparinibbāna* to have respectively in the overall development of these concepts towards the corporeal reading. I have in addition found it necessary to go somewhat beyond Miyamoto, in some of the Pāli materials, first, but also in the treatment of Chinese sources in particular in the latter part of my argument. I also arrange and analyse even those also treated by Miyamoto in from quite a different point of view.

[816] I see three main reasons for these difficulties. First, their meaning and development is related to a number of other concepts, including various rubrics of the fetters, typologies of degrees of spiritual attainment (especially the four "fruits of monastic practice", *śrāmaṇyaphala*), and not least, the concept of *nirvāṇa* itself. Second, as I will argue below, it seems that we have in these concepts a particularly vivid case of the way ideas can sometimes change not only because of the ways multiple authors consciously wield them in the service of deliberate conceptual agendas, but also through processes almost independent of individual human intention, in an almost blind cross-breeding of protozoan parts of ideas; the part played in this story by almost chance resemblances between originally separate terms (e.g. *upādi* and *upadhi, anupādā* and *saupādisesa, parinibbāyin* and *parinibbayati* etc.) seems to have been strikingly large. Third, it seems that for much of their history, at least prior to the advent of the later standard "corporeal" rereading of them, these terms were relatively marginal in Buddhist discourse, a condition that may indeed have made possible precisely the remarkable degree of play we see in their doctrinal uses and import; but this means that in many cases we have to try and guess at their various uses from relatively small shreds of evidence.

[817] For example, I am still unsure why the term *parinibbāna* and cognates came to refer to the physical death of the Buddha or a like being. More importantly, I am still not entirely sure *why* these terms eventually shifted to mean two "kinds of" *nirvāṇa,* and why, therefore, the term *upādi-* came to refer, in what I call the "corporeal" reading, to psycho-physical embodiment in the five *skandhas*.

for the eventual shift from the former to the latter. Finally, I endeavour to highlight the obscurities that still remain.

Despite these limitations, I think I can make two main claims about the ideas under study. First, it seems clear to me, as to several predecessors, that these terms had very little to do with embodiment (the *skandhas*) in the Pāli canon, but that over time they came clearly and dominantly to be understood in such terms. Second, and in more of a departure from prior scholarship, it seems to me that a broad examination of a wider range of Chinese evidence than has been previously considered strongly suggests that this shift may have been significantly later than has been thought, and may not have really taken hold or become widely disseminated until as late as the fourth century C.E.

3.4.1 Overt contrast between *saupādisesa* and *anupādisesa*

The Pāli-canonical text usually cited as seminal for the distinction between these two kinds of *nibbāna*(*-dhātu*) is Iti 44, the *Nibbānadhātu-sutta,* where they are called *saupādisesā nibbānadhātu* and *anupādisesā nibbānadhātu*. In fact, however, as Miyamoto notes, this is in fact the *only* text in the Pāli canon that discusses the contrast directly, and that speaks of a *sopādisesa nibbāna(-*dhātu*) in any form; the doctrine it contains is also aberrant in terms of the canon at large, even though it is the closest we come to the concepts that later become standard in the Pāli corpus.[818] The distinction as it is presented here is also quite opaque, but insofar as we can make out its intention, it seems to line up with the "corporeal" interpretation, and indeed, to be the only passage in the Pāli canon that does so; as best I can make it out, the difference is as follows.

[818] Miyamoto 34.

In the *saupādisesā nibbānadhātu,* a monk's "five faculties still persist, as a result of whose non-disappearance he still receives that which is charming and otherwise, experiences pleasure and pain";[819] his attainment is said to be called *saupādisesā nibbānadhātu* because of the fact that he has destroyed the three poisons of greed, hatred, and delusion.[820] In the *anupādisesā nibbānadhātu,* whose accomplishments are otherwise the same as in the first case, "all that is sensed right here, being not rejoiced in, will become cold". We should note that though the connection is not drawn explicitly here, elsewhere in the canon, this formula of "all that is sensed, not being rejoiced in, becoming cold" is repeatedly used with reference to the "breaking up of the body" or the moment of physical death, as a clear expression of the idea that there will be no further rebirth.[821] The state of *anupādisesā* is further enigmatically said to be so called just because of this attainment.[822] In verses that follow the prose giving the above explanations, it is further explained that *saupādisesā nibbānadhātu* "pertains to these seen conditions here (*idha diṭṭhadhammikā*)", but *anupādisesā,* "wherein becomings entirely cease (*yamhi nirujjhanti bhavāni sabbaso*), pertains to the hereafter (*samparāyikā*)".[823] In other words, it seems that the "remnant" referred to here is understood to mean the continuation of sense

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[819] Masefield 35: *tassa tiṭṭhanteva pañcindriyāni yesaṃ avighātattā1 manāpāmanāpaṃ paccanubhoti sukhadukkhaṃ paṭisaṃvedeti.*

[820] This explanation would seem to account for the description of the state as *nibbānadhātu,* rather than trying to account for its description as *saupādisesa.*

[821] " . . . when he feels a feeling terminating with life, he understands, 'I feel a feeling terminating with life.' He understands, 'On the dissolution of the body, with the ending of life, all that is felt, not being delighted in, will become cool right here" (*jīvitapariyantikaṃ vedanaṃ vedayamāno jīvitapariyantikaṃ vedanaṃ vedayāmī'ti pajānāti. kāyassa bhedā uddhaṃ jīvitapariyādānā idheva sabbavedayitāni anabhinanditāni sīti bhavissanti*). See MN 140, *Dhātuvibhānga-sutta,* Ñāṇamoli 1093*;* SN 12.51, "Thorough Investigation", Bodhi 588; SN 22.88, "Assaji", Bodhi 942; SN 36.7, "The Sick Ward", Bodhi 1268; SN 54.8, "The Simile of the Lamp", Bodhi 1772-1773.

[822] Masefield 35: " . . . it is this, monks, that is spoken of as the *nibbāna*-element that is with substrate-remnant"; *tassa idheva bhikkhave sabbavedayitāni anabhinanditāni sītī bhavissanti.*

[823] Masefield 36: *ekā hi dhātu idha diṭṭhadhammikā/ saupādisesā bhavanettisaṅkhayā/ anupādisesā pana samparāyikā/ yamhi nirujjhanti bhavāni sabbaso.*

experience after the moment of physical death, i.e. to rebirth to further experience, and the notion of "without remainder" means (as in AN 7.6.52 below) that a person has no remaining attachment to further future existences.

As will be apparent from passages cited below, the doctrine of the text here appears confused, or at least exceptional, in the context of the broader pattern of discourse about *anupādisesa, anupādāparinibbāna*(*dhātu*), *saupādisesa* and so on in the Pāli canon. Elsewhere, it is more typical to *oppose* the attainment of liberation "here in this visible world" (*diṭṭheva dhamme aññā* etc.) to the state that pertains when there is a remainder,[824] so that *diṭṭheva dhamme aññā* seems usually to mean that there will be no need for further rebirths in order to attain full liberation. Here, however, the text perversely states that *saupādisesanibbānadhātu* pertains to this visible world, and *anupādisesa* to the hereafter.[825] Further, as already noted after Miyamoto, this text is the *only* text in the canon that explicitly discusses an opposition between anything like a **sopādisesanibbāna* and an *anupādisesanibbāna,* and the only text in which the notion of a *saupādisesā nibbānadhātu* appears at all. Because of the contrast between these aspects of the doctrine of the text and the more usual usages of *saupādisesa* and *anupādisesa,* I will argue towards the end of this section that this may mean that Iti 44 is to be associated with a relatively late phase of the doctrine, or at least, with a minority strand of the Pāli materials that seem to understand *saupādisesa* and *anupādisesa* in terms that veer more in the direction of the later understanding.

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[824] See passages cited in n. 855.

[825] The starkness of this contrast, and the way this single passage stands out against the norm of other early materials, is noted by Ui, 253 (though he phrases the point, characteristically, in terms of the Āgamas and not the Pāli Nikāyas).

Fortunately, given the confusion we find in this text, it is not quite true that the distinction between two kinds of *liberation* called *saupādisesa* and *anupādisesa* is never expounded elsewhere in the Nikāyas. In an important discussion not sufficiently noted in prior secondary scholarship,[826] AN 7.6.52, "Tissa", "liberation" (*vimutti*) is discussed as *anupādisesa,* and the difference between *saupādisesa* and *anupādisesa* is then discussed. Here, *saupādisesa* and *anupādisesa* come much closer to the uses each assumes when discussed in isolation elsewhere in the canon, and it therefore makes a much better starting point in examining the (non-corporeal) usual sense of these terms in Pāli-canonical contexts.

Two *devas* are depicted as approaching the Tathāgata, saluting him, and announcing that a group of nuns are liberated: the second *deva* says specifically "These nuns are wholly freed and without a remnant of attachment" (*anupādisesā suvimuttā*),[827] and the Tathāgata approves this statement. Moggallāna then wonders what kinds of gods know the difference between those with remainder and those without (without, let us note, applying the term *saupādisesā* directly to *vimuttā/vimutti,* so that it is not entirely clear that we are discussing "two types of liberation").[828] Instead of asking his question of the Tathāgata, however – though he is sitting right next to him! – Moggallāna takes himself off by magical power ("as a strong man might stretch forth his bent arm" etc.) to Brahmā Heaven, where he talks with Tissa, a recently deceased monk who has been reincarnated as a god there. Tissa explains that only gods who are not satisfied with life in the Brahmā heavens know the difference between these two classes of persons. In the course of his explanation, Tissa equates "the monk who is freed both ways

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[826] Hayashi cites this text, 576, but without seeming to notice that its understanding of *sopādisesa* is inconsistent with the standard later reading, which on the whole he projects back into the Pāli materials.

[827] *etā bhante bhikkhuniyo anupādisesā suvimuttāti;* Woodward and Hare IV, 43, translation modified.

[828] *katamesānaṃ kho devānaṃ evaṃ ñāṇaṃ hoti savupādisese vā savupādisesoti, anupādisese vā anupādisesoti.*

(*ubhatobhāgavimutto*)"[829] and one who is "freed by wisdom" (*paññāvimutto*) with the class of those "[liberated] without remainder" (*anupādisesa*); on the other hand, he equates the one who "knows with his body" (*kāyasakkhī*), the "view-winner", the one "freed by faith", and the "Dhamma follower" with those "[liberated] with remainder".[830] Upon Moggallāna's return to the Tathāgata's side, the Tathāgata teaches a seventh category, one who "enters and abides in signless mental concentration" (*animittaṃ cetosamādhiṃ*), who also falls in the second category. It is particularly worthy of note for our purposes here that the text says of the first class of persons, those without remainder,[831] that the gods know that "so long as his body lasts, *devas* and men shall see him, but on the breaking up of the body they shall not see him."[832] This is, as we shall see below, a formula that is used elsewhere to describe the corporeal concomitants of the complete liberation of the Tathāgata himself.[833]

Now, it is notable that in this passage, we do indeed find a connection between the idea of "liberation without remainder" and aspects of the person's corporeal fate: the explicit

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[829] On this and the following five types of attainment, Woodward and Hare conveniently refer us to AN 7.2.14, Woodward and Hare IV, 7, but the text there does not give any further details about the qualities of each.

[830] At least, this is how the text reads in Woodward and Hare's translation, IV, 44-45. There seems to be a discrepancy with the "BJT" text available through the LaTrobe database (the Sri Lanka Buddha Jayanti Tipitaka text, in a digitised version prepared by the Sri Laṇka Tipiṭaka Project, http://www.metta.lk/tipitaka/), which reads in every case to say only that the gods know "of one with remainder that he is with remainder, and of one without remainder that he is without remainder" (*saupādisesevā saupādisesoti, anupādisese vā anupādisesoti*). Unfortunately, I had no access to the printed PTS version of the canon while preparing this dissertation, and have had to take it on faith that Woodward and Hare reflect the PTS text accurately and are not interpolating their own speculative interpretation.

[831] Of the second class it says, in essence, that they have the potential by hard practice and virtuous action to attain to a destiny beyond the godly life; Woodward and Hare IV, 44-45.

[832] *yāvassa kāyo ṭhassati tāva naṃ dakkhinti devamanussā, kāyassa bhedā na naṃ dakkhinti devamanussāti.*

[833] See e.g. DN 1, Walshe 90: to the formula as it is found in AN, DN adds, as we will see below, that the body of the Tathāgata "stands, but the links binding it to becoming are cut": *ucchinnabhavanettiko bhikkhave tathāgatassa kāyo tiṭṭhati*; and a simile of mangoes on a cut stalk.

statement that the first two categories of person, who are liberated without remainder, remain visible to gods and men only until the break-up of this body. In this limited respect, it presages the later corporeal understanding of the category of "remainder" as corporeal. Despite this commonality with the later reading, however, it is also notable that the interpretation of the categories found here is nonetheless quite different from later understandings. Later theories would hold that the notion of "remainder" referred to the lingering physical body of a fully liberated being in their last lifetime of all, so that "with remainder" and "without remainder" referred to sequential stages in the spiritual evolution of the same perfectly awakened person. Here, by contrast, "remainder" clearly refers to an imperfectly liberated state in which there is a remainder of delusion, entrapment in *saṃsāra* etc., and the being is therefore destined to future rebirth; but "without remainder", by contrast, is a way of speaking precisely about full liberation as a category of spiritual attainment *tout court,* regardless of any question of stages in the chronology of such a being, i.e. *even in this lifetime*.[834]

The foregoing are the only two passages I have been able to find in which the canon explicitly discusses an opposition between *saupādisesa* and *anupādisesa*. Iti 44 is the only passage in which the contrast is applied to any relative of the concept of *nibbāna*, but for this reason it has been taken as a *locus classicus* for the origin of the later doctrine. As we have seen, however, this text is confused, and we will see below that the use of the terms *saupādisesa* and *anupādisesa* here is quite atypical of the Pāli materials as a whole. "Tissa", by contrast, discusses the terms in the context of a discussion of *vimutti* rather than *nibbāna*, but in it, the understanding of the two terms in question is much more representative of the Pāli canon as a whole.

[834] It is indeed confusing, but instructive, to note that as an effect of these different understandings, the application of the term "without remainder" (*anupādisesa*) to a fully enlightened being, especially in "Tissa", is made to cover almost precisely that aspect of their state that the term "with remainder" (*saupādisesa*) would come to cover in the later doctrine, i.e. the fact that such beings linger physically (remain visible) from the time of their complete awakening until the breakup of their body, and only then leave the round of *saṃsāra* entirely (become invisible to gods and men).

In closing this section about texts which overtly oppose those "without remnant" and those "with a remnant", we should also examine SuN 2.12 "Vaṇgīsa".[835] As Miyamoto points out, the inquiries of disciples about the post-mortem fate of Nigodhakappa in this text, and answers given thereto by the Buddha, posit a distinction between *saupādisesa* and *asesa* ("without remainder"). Vaṇgīsa, on behalf of a group of his confreres, asks the Buddha whether Nigodhakappa is really *parinibbuta* or whether, rather, he has "a remainder" (*nibbāyi so ādu upādiseso/ yathā vimutto ahu naṃ suṇoma*).[836] The Buddha, in the course of his reply, states that Nigodhakappa has indeed "passed beyond birth and death *with no remainder*" (*atāri jātimaraṇaṃ asesaṃ*).[837] It is further noteworthy (as we will see with reference to other examples below) that in response to the Tathāgata's description of Nigodhakappa's attainments, Vaṇgīsa says that Nigodhakappa "saw the beginning of grasping" (*addasa bhagavā ādiṃ upādānassa kappiyo*),[838] which confirms the connection between *upādi-* in *upādisesa* and *upādāna*.[839] Here we see, as in "Tissa", that "without remainder" is associated with full attainment of release (here specifically

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[835] SuN 2.12 verses are largely but not exactly paralleled at ThaG 1263-1278, Norman, *Elder's Verses* I, 115-116. Miyamoto discusses this text 35-36. Watanabe Fumimaro has also studied this text in connection with the concepts under study here, but to poorer effect; see n. 872. See Norman's note at *Elder's Verses* I, 299 for a detailed speculative account of earlier versions of the key verse, which, however, assumes the prior existence of the opposition between *sa-* and *anupādisesa,* interpreted in terms of the "corporeal" model, an assumption I obviously find likely to be anachronistic.

[836] v. 354, Norman, *Group of Discourses* 44.

[837] v. 355, Norman, *Group of Discourses* 44; the only word in Norman reflecting this important instance of *asesa* is "all". Despite the appearances given by Miyamoto's inclusion of the term *saupādisesa* in his parentheses in his translation of this passage, the actual term is not found there; Miyamoto 35.

[838] v. 358, Norman, *Group of Discourses* 44.

[839] It may also be worth noting that Vaṇgīsa, in asking his question of the Buddha, speaks of the Buddha as "the cutter-off of uncertainties in this very visible world (Norman: 'in the world of phenomena'; *diṭṭheva dhamme yo vicikicchānaṃ chettā*)", v. 343, Norman, *Group of Discourses* 42. No direct link is made between the state of no-remainder and the idea of an attainment *diṭṭheva dhamme,* but it is interesting nonetheless that this idea, which becomes so regularly part of the discourse about *anupādisesa* later on, is already floating around in this possibly earliest context.

identified by cognates of the term *nibbāna*), and opposed to a state in which a remainder "remains".

This SuN passage is thus consonant with both "Tissa" and with the mainstream understanding of each term separately (and cognates) that we will examine below, but beyond that, it adds little to our understanding of the terms. It is important to note it, however, not only because there are so few passages in which the contrast is made explicitly, but also because, as Miyamoto notes, the fact that it is found in the SuN may well make it the earliest such locus.[840]

We thus see that even though there are very few passages that directly discuss a contrast between a state of *anupādisesa* and *sopādisesa,* or related notions, even among those that do, Iti 44 is an anomaly, and presents a minority understanding of the terms. Beyond these passages, however, the canon also contains further passages that discuss terms related to each of our target terms here in detail, and indeed, quite a large number of passages that at least make passing mention of one or both (sometimes implicitly). We can glean quite a lot more about these terms from such passages, beginning with passages that focus on *saupādisesa.*

[840] Miyamoto 35. In support of this possibility, note that according to Norman, the metre of this text is primarily *triṣṭubh,* and 352 and 355 are in *triṣṭubh-jagatī,* which he considers old (see above n. 3067 etc.); see Norman, *Group of Discourses* 232. Since the mainstream understandings of *sopādisesa* and *anupādisesa* do *not* bear directly on the history of ideas of embodiment, however, I will not be concerned here with attempting to determine anything about the relative dates of the texts studied in this section and the ideas in them; for our purposes, it suffices to understand that any clear understanding of *sôpadhiśeṣa* (= Pāli *sopādisesa*) certainly postdates the Pāli-canonical texts (even including the odd doctrine of Iti 44). Readers interested in the relative chronology of these ideas can consult Miyamoto, esp. 35-36, where he argues that the SuN 2.12 idea of "having a remainder" was an early precedent for the emergence of the idea of the Non-Returner, and further that the doctrine of Non-Returning alone probably forms an intermediate phase that precedes the elaboration of the full-blown schema of the four levels of attainment Arhat/Non-Returner/Once-Returner/Stream-Enterer.

3.4.2 *Saupādisesa* alone

The term *sopādisesa* (as opposed to the more usual cognate *saupādi~*) only occurs in one text in the Nikāyas, at AN 9.2.12, the *Sopādisesa-sutta,* another text that has been discussed surprisingly little by prior scholars of this topic; the text, however, is quite illuminating on the subject of how the tradition understood this term.

This text depicts Sāriputta hearing "wanderers of other views" state that "those who die with some attached remainder" (*yo koci āvuso sopādiseso kālaṃ karoti*) all go to some bad destiny.[841] Sāriputta asks the Buddha the truth of the matter. The Buddha says that some of these non-Buddhists do know in part what they are talking about, in terms that echo AN 7.6.52;[842] he then says that there are nine kinds of person who, though they die with some attached remainder, are nonetheless free of bad rebirths: these are persons of various partial spiritual accomplishments, according to a complex ninefold typology.[843] All nine of these types have in common the fact that they are not accomplished in wisdom, however, which seems therefore to be the watershed that divides those "with a remnant of attachment" from a presumed implicit contrasting category of those who do not have such a remnant. As opposed to the assertion of the non-Buddhist wanderers that all with attached remainder go to an evil destiny, the Buddha says of such persons that they meet various destinies in accordance with their

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[841] It is noteworthy that in this text, the Buddha is never shown to disagree with this statement of the non-Buddhist *śrāmaṇera*. It seems that Buddhism accepted, along with these figures, the description of beings of no particular spiritual accomplishments, destined for rebirth in the worst destinies, as *sopādisesa,* just as much as it admitted the use of the term for Non-Returners (and, here, Once-Returners etc.). In this light, Watanabe's tidy schema, 127, whereby *sopādisesa* refers only to Non-Returners, and Once-Returners (etc.?) are called just "*sopādi*", seems clearly to be just a figment of scholarly imagination unsupportable in the texts.

[842] " . . . some will know of one who has attachment: he has some attached remainder; and some will know of one who has no attachment; he has none" (*ke ca sopādisesaṃ vā upādisesoti jānissanti, anupādisesaṃ vā anupādisesoti jānissanti*); Woodward and Hare IV, 252.

[843] Woodward and Hare IV, 252-254.

accomplishments, in order from best to worst. The first five types[844] are all said to destroy the five lower fetters,[845] and their fates are:

(i) attains *parinibbāna* in the intermediate state (*antarā parinibbāyī hoti*);

(ii) attains *parinibbāna* immediately after rebirth (*upahacca parinibbāyī hoti*);

(iii) attains *parinibbāna* without effort (*asaṇkhāraparinibbāyī hoti*);

(iv) attains *parinibbāna* with effort (*sasaṇkhāra parinibbāyī hoti*);

(v) ascends the stream of existence towards the Akaniṭṭha heaven (*uddhaṃsoto hoti akaṇiṭṭhagāmī*).[846]

The remaining four types[847] only destroy the three fetters,[848] and their fates are:

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[844] These are five types of non-returner are also found at DN 33, *Sangīti-sutta,* Walshe 496; SN 46.3, Bodhi 1572; SN 48.15, Bodhi 1674; SN 48.24 (included in the full list of nine found here), Bodhi 1677; SN 48.66, Bodhi 1702-1703; SN 51.26, Bodhi 1743; SN 54.5, Bodhi 1767-1768; SN 55.25, Bodhi 1814; AN 7.2.16, Woodward and Hare IV, 9; AN 7.2.52, Woodward and Hare IV, 40-42.

[845] On the five lower fetters and their possible place in canonical chronology, see p. 110. Note that the destruction of the five lower fetters is part of a widespread standard description of the Non-Returner: see n. 894 below.

[846] These five types seem to have caused translators and commentators much difficulty. Woodward and Hare's translations seem in some cases to be wrong, and in any case are virtually incomprehensible: "becomes completely cool after an interval", "becomes completely cool after lessening his period", "becomes completely cool without (karmic) residue", "becomes completely cool after some residue", and "ascends the stream of existence up to the Akaniṭṭha heaven". Walshe translates "the less-than-half-timer", "the more-than-half-timer", "the gainer without exertion", "the gainer with exertion", and "he who goes upstream to the highest". Bodhi translates "attainer of Nibbāna in the interval", "attainer of Nibbāna upon landing", "attainer of Nibbāna without exertion", "attainer of Nibbāna with exertion", and "one bound upstream, heading towards the Akaniṭṭha realm". I follow Bodhi's interpretation (for which see below), which seems to me quite reasonable, and the above translation represents my own attempt to convey its sense as clearly as possible.

[847] This same hierarchy of achievement and results is found also (in reverse order) e.g. at AN 3.9.85-86, Woodward and Hare I, 211-214. See also SN 48.24 (included in the full list of nine found here), Bodhi 1677.

[848] On the three fetters (*sakkāyadiṭṭhi,* doubt, and overattachment to rite and ritual) see p. 109.

(vi) "[reduces lust, hatred and delusion, and] becomes a Once-returner, who returns to this world again once only and makes and end of ill";

(vii) "becomes a Once-issuer (*ekabījin*);[849] and on being born into the state of man just once, he makes an end of ill";

(viii) "becomes a Clan-to-clan-goer (*kolaṇkola*);[850] and running on, faring on through two or three clans, he makes an end of ill";

(ix) "becomes one who will be reborn seven times at most (*sattakkhattuparamaṃ*); and running on, faring on among *devas* and men for seven times at most, he makes an end of ill".[851]

This typology is difficult of interpretation, particularly the first five terms (which constitute a classic fivefold rubric of types of Non-Returner). Bodhi, for example, cites commentary specifying that (i) the *antarāparinibbāyin* attains arhatship in the first half of a life in the pure abode; (ii) the *upahaccaparinibbāyin* is one who attains arhatship after the first half of that lifespan; (iii) the next two types are then interpreted as glosses on these first two respectively.[852] Bodhi argues cogently, however, in explanation of his own translations, that a literal reading of the terms means we should read the first five terms thus: (i) *antarāparinibbāyin* is one who attains Nibbāna in the interval between lives, "perhaps while existing in a subtle body in the intermediate state"; (ii) *upahaccaparinibbāyin* "then becomes one who attains Nibbāna 'upon landing' or 'striking ground' in the new existence, i.e. almost immediately after taking rebirth"; (iii) and (iv) are types who attain arhatship during the next lifetime,

[849] Woodward translates "one-seeder" at Woodward and Hare I, 213.

[850] Woodward translates "is reborn in a good family", Woodward and Hare I, 213.

[851] These translations from Woodward and Hare IV, 253-254.

[852] Bodhi 1902 n. 65.

distinguished by the effort they must expend; (v) is one who takes rebirth in successive Pure Abodes until finally attaining arhatship in the Akaniṭṭha realm.[853]

If we follow Bodhi's interpretation of the first five members of the rubric, then for our current purposes, we can set aside any difficulties in determining the precise meaning of each term, and arrive at quite a clear interpretation of the general thrust of the rubric as a whole. It is clear, that is to say, that the text proposes this ninefold rubric as a gradated series of degrees to which the persons concerned remain entangled in *saṃsāra,* calibrated to their accomplishments in spiritual practice. At the top end of the scale are persons who are so nearly fully liberated that although they are not liberated exactly at physical death, their full liberation is separated from the moment of their physical death by the merest whisker. As we proceed down the scale, persons are successively reborn for longer and in less elevated states. The first five types, which are all sub-categories of Non-Returner, are alike exempt from return to the human realm; the last four, however, are reborn in this less exalted of destinies, and once more, there too we find a gradated series from less to more rebirths.

In this light, it is clear that the text understands "with a remnant of clinging" in a manner consonant with that we have seen in other texts. To have a remnant of clinging means to be destined to some kind of rebirth (or, perhaps more accurately in the case of the *antarāparinibbāyin,* some continued existence, however slight, after physical death at the end of this lifetime). By implication, to be without remainder is to be free from rebirth after the end of this current lifetime.

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[853] As Bodhi also notes, non-Theravāda schools followed an interpretation like his; 1903. For an example of Guṇabhadra's translation of this rubric (as the latter five members of a rubric of "seven fruits"), which certainly accords with Bodhi's reading, see n. 904.

The association found in this AN 9.2.12 between *sopādisesa*- and Non-Returners[854] (the first five categories; though, as noted above, in this case the ninefold rubric also includes further categories of Once-Returners etc., and the text nowhere refutes the use of the term by non-Buddhists to refer to those destined for rebirth in the three worst destinies) is echoed plentifully in a large number of other canonical passages, to the extent that is surely no exaggeration to call it an "orthodoxy", even if it was perhaps orthodox only for a certain portion of the Pāli-canonical period.[855] These passages do not actually use the compound *sopādisesa,* but rather speak consistently of what will become of a person "if there should be some substrate left" (*sati vā upādisese*); likewise, they do not speak directly of *anupādisesa,* but rather speak merely of "in this visible here and now" (*diṭṭheva dhamme aññā*) , almost as if by a kind of shorthand.[856] Despite these differences in wording, however, they clearly assume a

[854] The Non-Returner features as part of the fourfold rubric of fruits of practice; see the sources listed in n. 897 below. See also n. 840 for Miyamoto's speculations on the relative ages of these ideas.

[855] In DN 22, the *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna-sutta,* the four foundations of mindfulness are said in a repeated formula to result in Arahantship in this visible world here and now (*diṭṭheva dhamme*), or, "if there should be some substrate left (*sati vā upādisese*)", in the result of Non-Returner (*anāgāmitā*); Walshe 350. The same formula, associating the status of Non-Returner with the presence of a residue, is also found describing the fruits of the four foundations of mindfulness at SN 47.36, "Final Knowledge", Bodhi 1658; for the five faculties (*pañcêndriya*) at SN 48.65, "Two Fruits", Bodhi 1702; for the four *iddhipāda* at SN 51.25, Bodhi 1743; and for mindfulness of breathing at SN 54.4, Bodhi 1767. The formula is also used to describe the possible fruits for the contemplation of a skeleton in SN 46.57, "The Skeleton", and then, according to the same formula, for a the contemplation of a worm-infested corpse, a livid corpse, a fissured corpse, a bloated corpse, lovingkindness, compassion, altruistic joy, equanimity, breathing, foulness (*asubha*), death, the repulsiveness of food, nondelight in the entire world, impermanence, suffering in the impermanent, nonself in what is suffering, abandonment, dispassion and cessation respectively in SN 46.58-76; Bodhi 1617-1621. Similarly, at AN 5.7.67, "Psychic Power", either of these two fruits is said to result from "bringing into being a supernatural power that combines with concentration and resolution" (*-samādhi-padhāna-saṅkhāra-samannāgataṃ iddhipādaṃ bhāveti*) each of four qualities in turn, namely resolution (*chanda*), energy (*viriya*), thought (*citta*), investigation (*vīmaṃsa*), of, fifthly, simple exertion (*ussāha*), Woodward and Hare III, 67; at AN 5.13.124, they also result from insight into the genesis and destruction of things, the perception of nothing attractive in the body, awareness of the disgusting nature of food, awareness of the absence of joy in the world, and impermanence in compounded phenomena, Woodward and Hare III, 110; at AN 10.6.58, "Forthgoing", monks who train themselves in a certain programme of thought are once more said to win one or the other of these two fruits, Woodward and Hare V, 73. Many of these passages are noted in Miyamoto 45 n. 10. As in these texts, the remnant of clinging and the state of the Non-Returner are also associated at MN 70, the *Kīṭāgiri-sutta,* though only in passing; Ñāṇamoli 584: *sati vā upādisese anāgāmitā.*

[856] We already saw above, however, that in Iti 44, against the contrast posited between these two states here, *diṭṭhadhammikā* = *diṭṭheva dhamme aññā* is rather *associated* explicitly with *saupādisesanibbānadhātu.*

doctrine that is broadly consonant with the passages we examined above, on which *saupādisesa* or cognates refers to a partially beatified state in which the person, though they have the potential to eventually attain liberation, is nonetheless bound for more rebirth, as opposed to a (sometimes partly implicit) state in which full liberation is attained already in the here-and-now.

Finally, it is surely of interest to the understanding of *saupādisesa* that at MN 105, *Sunakkhata-sutta,* in the course of a disquisition on the dangers of overly fixating on the attainment of Nibbāna that gives a twist to the parable of the surgeon removing a poisoned arrow, the same word *saupādisesa* is used to refer to a remnant of poison that remains in the system of the patient even after the arrow's removal:[857] "The surgeon . . . would pull out the arrow and would expel the poisonous humour, leaving a trace of it behind (*saupādisesa*). Knowing that a trace was left behind, he would say, 'Good man, the arrow has been pulled out from you; the poisonous humour has been expelled with a trace left behind, but it is incapable of harming you . . ."[858] So far as I can see, Ñāṇamoli's translation here does not account for the presence of

[857] Ñāṇamoli, *Minor Readings* 214-215 n. 50, suggests on the basis of this passage that the concept of *upādisesa* originates in medical terminology for a remainder of poison. It is not clear to me how this theory would account for the presence of the element *upādi* in the term. Ñāṇamoli also assumes the later standard "corporeal" reading of the terms, saying, "The terms are then used figuratively of the Arahant, who during the remainder of his life manifests the 'residue of clinging left' in the form of the five-category process [*khandhas*], which, however, 'will cease' with the end of his life-span". As will be clear from the arguments I put forward here, the bulk of the evidence in the Pāli canon simply does not support the contention that this was the first doctrinal application of the term. If the earliest doctrinal application was to the notion of a remnant of clinging that would lead to some residual future rebirth, however, it is difficult to see how the analogy with a harmless residue of poison in the body would work. These considerations, in addition to the fact that the passage is attested only once and could therefore be quite *ad hoc,* suggest to me that this passage, rather than representing the *origin* of the terms under study, represents a "reverse-engineered" allegorical presentation of these doctrinal constructs in a concrete setting (at a stage in its development which is difficult to determine).

[858] Ñāṇamoli 865: *sallaṃ abbaheyya apaneyya visadosaṃ saupādisesaṃ saupādisesoti maññamāno so evaṃ vadeyya: ambho purisa, ubbhataṃ kho te sallaṃ, apanīto visadoso saupādiseso, analañca te antarāyāya . . .* The same formula is repeated verbatim, as part of the description of a patient who heeds his doctor's advice and heals properly in contrast to the heedless patient described here, at Ñāṇamoli 866-867. Ñāṇamoli notes that this reading is found in Burmese-script Buddhasāsana Samiti and Sinhala-script Buddha Janayti Tripitaka Series editions, but that the PTS text reads with the opposite meaning, i.e. that the

the element *upādi* in *saupādisesa,* but merely elides it, as does Horner's; it is difficult, however, to think what it means in the context of the simile of the arrow (what would it mean for there to be a "remnant of grasping" in the poison in the patient's system?), and this inconsistency suggests that the term has been borrowed wholesale from the discourse about a "remainder of clinging" elsewhere. The arrow is explicitly compared in the text to craving, and the poison to ignorance. The monk who behaves correctly, according to the lesson of the parable, is later significantly described as without attachment (*upadhi = upādi):*[859] "When, Sunakkhatta, a bhikkhu practices restraint in the six bases of contact, and having understood that attachment is the root of suffering, is without attachment, liberated by the destruction of attachment, it is not possibly that he would direct his body or arouse his mind towards any object of attachment."[860] Thus, though the equation is never explicitly made in the text, the most consistent reading of the parable would be that the *upādisesa* of poison refers to a remnant of ignorance, which is further identified with clinging (*upadhi/upādi*). Especially given the use of *upādisesa* to refer to the remnant of (literal) poison in the parable, where *upādi* is difficult to explain on any literal meaning, it therefore seems likely that this text presumes the doctrine of "a remnant of clinging". (We should note, however, that there is no direct mention in the text

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doctor mistakenly thinks that the poison has been removed *without* remainder (*anupādiseso ti maññamāno*) and is (somehow) *capable* of harming (*alañ ca te antarāyāya*); Ñāṇamoli 1310 n. 1003. Horner translates half with one text and half with the other in an attempt to make sense of the passage; Horner III, 42.

[859] Strictly speaking, *upadhi* < *upa/dhā* is derivationally different from *upādi* = *upādāna* < *upa-ā/dā*; the former means "something lain down or under" and thus "foundation, basis" (PTS Dict s.v. *upadhi*), whereas the latter means "taking to oneself", "grasping", "attachment", and also the objects of such an action. Both seem to be used interchangeably for clinging as the basis of rebirth, however. Note also that it is probably the more literal sense of *upadhi* that underlies the "new translation" convention of rendering *upadhiśeṣa* as 依 in Chinese, whereas the "Old Translation" 餘 elides the first part of the compound entirely and translates only the *–sesa/-śeṣa*.

[860] Ñāṇamoli 867: *so vata sunakkhatta, bhikkhu chasu essāyatanesu saṃvutakārī. upadhi dukkhassa mūlanti1 iti vidatvā nirupadhi, upadhisaṅkhaye vimutto upadhismiṃ vā kāyaṃ upasaṃharissati cittaṃ vā uppādessatī'ti netaṃ ṭhānaṃ vijjati.*

of whether or not persons are destined to further rebirth,[861] nor is the idea of a remnant associated with the stage of the Non-Returner.)

In sum, then, in passages where *saupādisesa* is discussed without any overt contrast with *anupādisesa,* it seems clear that it means "with a remnant of clinging" *to rebirth*, or, more loosely, to the fact that the person so referred to has a remnant of reincarnational destiny to live out before final liberation. This is borne out by the parabolic application of the term to the conceit of the extraction of the poisoned arrow, where *saupādisesa* refers to a remnant of "poison" (*dosa*) in the system of the patient, and this "poison" is allegorically identified with ignorance, the base condition of attachment to *saṃsāra*.[862] It is further generally consonant with what is stated about *saupādisesa* in those texts that do draw an explicit comparison with *anupādisesa,* as we saw above; and it makes good sense in terms of the semantics of *upādi,* as we will see below. For the moment, however, we turn to the consideration of a cognate concept to *anupādisesa,* which casts some light on the latter.

3.4.3 *Anupādāparinibbāna*

In several places in the canon, we find mention of an *anupādāparinibbāna,* or "complete Nibbāna without attachment". This first part of this compound, *anupādā,* is in fact cognate with *anupādi,* both being derived from the privative prefix *an-* and *upa/dā,* "to attach [to], to grasp [at]". Indeed, as Miyamoto notes,[863] *upādi* is a special compounding form that never occurs in the

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[861] Though we could indeed interpret the fact that the *bhikkhu* does not take any "object of attachment" (*upadhi*) as referring specifically to "a substratum (of rebirth)" or " clinging to rebirth", as at PTS Dict s.v. *upadhi*.

[862] Think, for example, of the parallel with the notion of *avidyāvāsabhūmi* as the most subtle condition of attachment to *saṃsāra* for adherents of the two lesser vehicles and novice *bodhisattvas* in the *Śrīmālādevīsiṃhanāda-sūtra*; for which see p. 280 above.

[863] Miyamoto 34.

canon outside the compound *upādisesa;* conversely, it is also worth noting that though we find *anupādānibbāna, anupādāsesa* never appears. It seems logical, therefore, to treat the two as cognates, with *upādi-* as the form of *upādā* that combines with *sesa*. The first part of the compound *anupādāparinibbāna* thus differs from *anupādisesa* primarily in the absence of any element expressing the notion of "remnant". Nonetheless, I believe that the concept of *anupādāparinibbāna* is closely related to *anupādisesa.*

The term *anupādāparinibbāna* appears commonly in the context of passages that lay out the ends to which Buddhist doctrine and practice aim. At MN 24 *Rathavinīta-sutta,* for instance, "it is for the sake of final Nibbāna without clinging (*anupādāparinibbāna*) that the holy life is lived under the Blessed One."[864] Purification of virtue, mind, view, purification by overcoming doubt, by knowledge and vision of what is the path and what is not the path, by knowledge and vision of the way that the holy life is lived are understood to be indispensable means to this end, but not identical to it.[865] Similarly, it is said at SN 35.75, "Sick", that "the Dhamma is taught by me for the sake of final Nibbāna without clinging".[866] At SN 45.42, *anupādāparinibbāna* is (seemingly paramount) among a number of reasons "the holy life is lived under the Blessed One", and the text further specifies that the Noble Eightfold Path is the way to attain *anupādāparinibbāna*.[867]

A more detailed description of the content of *anupādāparinibbāna* is given at AN 7.6.52, "Man's faring":

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[864] Ñāṇamoli 242: *anupādāparinibbānatthaṃ kho āvuso bhagavati brahmacariyaṃ vussati.*

[865] Ñāṇamoli 242-244.

[866] Bodhi 1159.

[867] Bodhi 1542-1543.

"Consider a monk who practices the following thought: 'If something did not exist, it would not be mine (*no cassa, no ce mi siyā*); it will not exist, and it will not be mine (*na bhavissati na me bhavissati*). I am hereby abandoning what exists, and what has come to be.' Thus he acquires equanimity (*upekkha*), and he delights in neither being nor [future] becoming (*bhave na rajjati, sambhave na rajjati*), but with true wisdom (*sammappaññāya*) sees there is a state of surpassing peace (*uttariṃ padaṃ saṇtaṃ*); and that state is indeed realised by him in all its fullness (*sabbena sabbaṃ pāhino*); and in all fullness is the tendency (*anusaya*) towards conceit abandoned by him, as is the tendency the lust for existence, and the tendency towards ignorance. Destroying the outflows (*āsavā*), he enters into and abides in the state without outflows that is the liberation of the mind (*anāsavaṃ cetovimuttiṃ*) and liberation by means of wisdom (*paññāvimuttiṃ*), in this very world here and now (*diṭṭheva dhamme*), realizing it himself by his own knowledge. This, monks, is called *anupādānaparinibbāna*."[868]

We note immediately that here, *anupādāparinibbāna* is associated with realisation "in the visible here-and-now" (*diṭṭheva dhamme*), a notion that was opposed to the state of the Non-Returner, for whom a "remnant of clinging remains", in the numerous SN and AN passages we just surveyed. This is in keeping with the well-known fact that *parinibbāna* and cognates are used interchangeably with *nibbāna* etc. in a wide variety of contexts in Pāli materials, and by no means necessarily refer always or specially to the moment of physical death.[869] If the notion of *anupādāparinibbāna* thus does not originally refer to the moment of physical death at all, it may have an importance hitherto overlooked for the evolution of the eventual explicit opposition between *saupādi*- and *anupādi*(*pari*)*nibbāna*(*dhātu*), since it provides an occasion for the bringing together of the term *parinibbāna* and a cognate of *anupādi* according to a logic entirely separate from the vexed problem of there being different "kinds" of *nibbāna*.

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[868] Woodward and Hare IV, 42-43; translation modified, in part with reference to parallels in MN 106, *Āneñjasappāya-sutta*, Ñāṇamoli 872. *idha pana bhikkhave, bhikkhu evaṃ paṭipanno hoti: no cassa, no ca me siyā. na bhavissati, na me bhavissati. yadatthi yaṃ bhūtaṃ taṃ pajahāmīti upekkhaṃ paṭilabhati. so bhave na rajjati. sambhave na rajjati. atthuttariṃ padaṃ santaṃ sammappaññāya passati. tañca khvāssa padaṃ sabbena sabbaṃ sacchikataṃ hoti. tassa sabbena sabbaṃ mānānusayo pahīno hoti. sabbena sabbaṃ bhavarāgānusayo pahīno hoti. sabbena sabbaṃ avijjānusayo pahīno hoti. so āsavānaṃ khayā anāsavaṃ cetovimuttiṃ paññāvimuttiṃ diṭṭheva dhamme sayaṃ abhiññā sacchikatvā upasampajja viharati.*

[869] On the different uses of *parinibbāna* and the process whereby it comes to refer to death in the Pāli texts, see Fujita, "*Nibbāna* to *parinibbāna*" 3-7.

We note further of this passage that its general tenor is entirely consistent with the opposition between *saupādisesa-*, as a condition that requires some future rebirth before liberation, and immediate realisation in this lifetime – the opposition that I am here arguing is the consistent meaning given to all terms related to the discourse of the "remnant" in the vast majority of the Pāli materials. The whole thrust of this passage is to describe the state of *anupādāparinibbāna* as one in which there will be no future existence: "I am hereby abandoning . . ."; "he delights in neither being nor future becoming", and so on. In contrast to the state of *saupādisesa* posited by the parable of the poisoned arrow, where a remnant of "poison" = ignorance remained, here even the latent tendency (*anusaya*) to ignorance is destroyed, along with the other *anusaya*. In all respects, then, it seems reasonable to understand that what is being described is a state of complete liberation in which there will be no more rebirth whatsoever. This state is entirely consistent with the state referred to by the very pithy shorthand *diṭṭheva dhamme aññā* in passages about two possible fruits cited above, and it is also very natural that this state would indeed be, as in the several passages cited above, the final end to which various Buddhist doctrines and practices aim.

In sum, these few passages in which the term *anupādāparinibbāna* occurs seem to add up to a consistent picture of a concept that seems entirely reconcilable with the notion of *anupādisesa* as it is found in the two canonical passages that contrast the latter term with *saupādisesa*. It is described as a state in which there will be no further rebirth, but in which, rather, full realisation has occurred in the visible here-and-now. This state is further understood to be the final end of Buddhist teaching and practice. Both of these aspects of the usage of the term make perfect sense when we bear in mind that *upādi* is equivalent to *upādā*(*na*) (see immediately below), and that, as Miyamoto points out in this connection, *upādāna* is from early

on considered the "cause of birth-and-death" (*jātimaraṇasaṃbhava*),[870] and entry into *nibbāna* is equated with the absence of *upādāna*. In light of these facts, it is understandable if the *anupādā* is equated with the term *parinibbāna*. Indeed, it seems that the relationship between *anupādā-* and *parinibbāna* here is not one in which *anupādā* describes *a type* of *parinibbāna* (*kāmadhāriya*), but rather one in which the two concepts gloss one another, that is, in which *parinibbāna* is *equated* with *anupādāna*; it is the state in which there is, simply, no more grasping at rebirth (this is, if you like, *bahuvrīhi*, that is, we are talking about a *parinibbāna* which is definitionally characterised by the absence of grasping).[871]

3.4.4 The meaning of the notion of *upādisesa* in the Pāli materials

On the basis of the (quite numerous) passages from the Pāli canon surveyed in §3.4.2 and 3.4.3 separately discussing the state of "having a vestige of clinging" (*saupādisesa*) and characterising final cessation, called *parinibbāna,* as *anupādā,* it seems to me that it is possible to venture an interpretation of the notion of *upādisesa* that makes consistent sense of the opposition between *saupādisesa* and *anupādisesa* found elsewhere, but in terms very different from the later "corporeal" reading of this opposition. *Upādi-* in this term, that is to say, means the same thing as *upādā* in *anupādāparinibbāna,* i.e. *upādāna,* specifically in the sense of grasping at (the conditions of) rebirth in *saṃsāra,* as Miyamoto Shōson has clearly argued.[872] Beings who have a

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[870] Miyamoto 34-35 and n. 6.

[871] In light of the above analysis, I believe that Miyamoto gives insufficient attention to the concept of *anupādāparinibbāna* in his article, and that this further leads him to misconstrue the place of the characterisation of the death of the Tathāgata as the attainment of an *anupādisesaparinibbāna* in the overall development of these concepts. It is on these two points that I differ most considerably from Miyamoto in the analysis of the Pāli materials. I lay out reasons for disagreeing will Miyamoto on these points below when I have considered one further set of relevant passages; see below p. 415 ff.

[872] Miyamoto 34-36. See also Bhattacharya 89-90; Lovejoy 133-136.

Due to the distinction this derivation introduces between *upādi* and *upadhi,* I will not consider here the latter in the Pāli context. Nevertheless, as Bhattacharya argues in detail, the two terms are closely related; the connection between them only serves to further the argument that the "corporeal" reading is not proper to the Pāli context.

Miyamoto notes pertinently that the term *upādi* seems never in the Pāli-canonical texts to be used for *the object of* grasping, and therefore is not applicable to the *khandhas*; see 46-47, n. 18. He is joined in this scruple by Lovejoy; see esp. 127-128. In this, both scholars are directly opposed to Bhattacharya, 92 (Bhattacharya, however, provides no references for his bald assertion that "[le] mot *upādi . . .* est souvent employé dans le Canon pāli pour désigner les *khandha*"); and Senart, against whom Lovejoy argues.

Fujita Kōtatsu notes difficulties in giving *upādi* the sense of "*object* of grasping" in the Pāli context, but still seems to want to do so in order to wrench Iti 44 in line with the later "corporeal" reading; he notes a passage at Sun 876 where he reads *anupādisesa* with the later commentary to have this meaning, 8, and also cites without comment studies in which Bhattacharya has argued for this interpretation for the Pāli materials, 12 n. 25. On p. 8 he also cites an instance of the term *anupādisesa* at SuN 876, in support of the thesis that the term already referred to a remnant of the *khandhas* in the canonical period. This verse reads: "Some wise men here do say that the supreme purity of the yakkha is to this extent [only], but some of them, who say that they are experts, preach that there is a time for [quenching] with no grasping remaining", Norman, *Group of Discourses* 115: *ettāvavataggampi vadanti heke/ yakkhassa suddhiṃ idha paṇḍitā se/ tesaṃ paneke samayaṃ vadanti/ anupādisese kusalā vadānā.* Norman's detailed note to this verse, 361-362, makes it clear that he finds it difficult to interpret, and also that he interprets *anupādisesa* in the light of the "standard" corporeal reading; he refers to his note to ThaG 1274 in which he similarly assumes the later reading, and like Fujita, makes use of later commentary. On such an interpretation, adducing this verse as *evidence for* the use of *upādisesa* to refer to the *khandhas* is circular at best. Absent this circular reasoning, however, and even in light of the context of this verse, it seems to me very difficult to determine exactly what is meant by its abbreviated reference to positions taken by various learned men and experts. It seems noteworthy, however, that the liberation referred to in the question as "to this extent only" (*ettāvataggaṃ*, v. 875) is clearly described in the text as a state in which "form has disappeared" . . . "form disappear[s]" etc., (along with "happiness or misery") (*rūpe vibhute; vibhoti rūpaṃ*; v. 872, 873, 874). Now, v. 876 makes it clear that *anupādisesa* is a state "other than this" (*aññampi*). It seems odd, to put it mildly, to claim that *anupādisesa* here means the final extinction of the *khandhas,* usually epitomised by synecdoche by "form" (*rūpa*) – as it would mean on the "corporeal" reading assumed here by Fujita and Norman – and at the same time that it is spoken of as something "other than" or beyond a state in which *rūpa* is already expressly said to have disappeared. Whatever *anupādisesa* means here, then, I find it unlikely that it can have a meaning consonant with the "corporeal" reading.

Watanabe Fumimaro seems to have perceived the fact that the Pāli meaning of *upādi* and terms containing it are not in line with the later "corporeal" reading, but the interpretation of *sopādisesa* and *anupādisesa* he advances against the "corporeal" reading certainly cannot be followed in all its particulars. Writing in 1961, Watanabe Fumimaro criticised prior studies of *sôpadhiśesa-* and *nirupadhiśesanirvāṇa* for basing themselves upon relatively late texts, taking as his primary example precisely Iti 44 and Āgama parallels, and the **Mahāvibhāṣā*; see 127 n. 1. Watanabe argued that the original meaning of *upādi* in Pāli *sôpādisesa* and *anupādisesa* is "attachment, clinging" (as opposed to the later interpretation that sees it as referring to the object clung to, i.e. the *skandhas*). To this extent, Watanabe's analysis is unobjectionable.

Watanabe makes further conjectures that I find unsupported by the textual evidence, however. He claims to identify a threefold typology of persons in early texts: those "with attachments" (*sa-upādi*), i.e. ordinary people (*pṛthagjana*); those with (only) a "remnant of attachment" (*sa-upādi-sesa*); and those "without attachment" (*an-upādi*). Watanabe cites only Iti 96 (for which see Masefield 82) for this threefold typology; he admits that the text is late, but claims (without giving any evidence) that the typology can be presumed early. (In this claim, Watanabe may be following the lead of Ui Hakuju; see Ui 246-247.) While this text does indeed propose that there are three kinds of persons in a manner analogous with Watanabe's typology (ordinary persons yoked to both sense-pleasures and becoming; non-returners who are unyoked from sense-pleasures but still yoked to becoming; and the arahant in whom the *āsavas* have been destroyed), however, the term *upādi* is used nowhere in it!

Watanabe further argues that a careful distinction can be seen in the diction of the texts regarding the physical death of the latter *two* types of person, which is spoken of as *parinibbāna* rather than with the ordinary verb *marati;* 126. Having scoured the canon, however, I was unable to find a single instance in which the term was clearly used of a Non-Returner, as Watanabe's argument would require.

"remnant of" *upādi-/upādāna,* therefore, are destined for further rebirths. Beings who have no clinging (*anupādā*) are fully liberated and therefore, as is only logically consistent, not destined for any rebirth; they have been finally liberated in this very lifetime (*diṭṭheva dhamme aññā*).

This understanding of the terms contrasts starkly with the later understanding that they refer instead to the relations obtaining between the same enlightened being and his body at different times in his last earthly career. In the Pāli materials, rather, *saupādi-* and *anupādi-* refer most typically and generally to two entirely different spiritual attainments and types of being, and *only anupādisesa* refers to the fully liberated *at any time.*

Related to this distinction is the further distinction that in the Pāli materials we have examined thus far, *saupādi-* and *anupādi-* do *not* refer to "kinds of" Nibbāna, with the sole possible exception of the confused Iti 44 passage we began with. In fact, it would be nonsensical to call the state of *saupādisesa,* as it is characterised in the numerous texts cited above, "*nibbāna*" at

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(I should note here that the IBK version of Watanabe's paper I used had fns. 10-14 removed, and I was unable to identify all his sources for this claim.) On the basis of these claims, Watanabe then argues that the Pāli texts originally spoke of *sopādisesa-* and *anupādisesa-parinibbāna,* referring to the physical deaths of each of these two types of persons (which were followed by different post-mortem fates on the basis of their different spiritual attainments in this world), and that it was only subsequently that the tradition forgot that this was what the terms meant, and reinterpreted them to refer to two different types or phases of *nibbāna* for the same person, viz. the moment of awakening during life, and the physical death at the end of that life; 127. As I will note immediately below, however, no term like *sopādisesaparinibbāna* is attested in the canon, and for good reason; it is logically inconsistent with the understanding of *upādisesa* found in all the texts.

One of Watanabe's main example texts for his argument is SuN 2.12, "Vaṇgīsa", in which, as we saw above, Vaṇgīsa is depicted as wondering whether his preceptor Nigodhakappa has really gained *parinibbāna* or not. Watanabe notes that this text is careful to use the verb *parinibbā* rather than the ordinary *marati*, and also that the question of whether Nigodhakappa was indeed attained *parinibbāna* is posed in the form; "Did he gain quenching (*nibbāna*) [without grasping] or did he have some grasping remaining (*nibbāyi so ādu upādiseso*)? Let us hear how he was released;" Norman, *Group of Discourses* 44. Vaṇgīsa is assured by the Buddha, however, that Nigodhakappa has "cut the strong stretched-out net of deceitful death" and "truly passed beyond the realm of death, which is very hard to cross"; Norman 44. It seems therefore that this text can only show that *parinibbāna* and cognates were used for those who were completely liberated, which we know already, and Watanabe's contention that it is used of persons *sopādisesa* remains unproven.

all.[873] The notion of *anupādisesā nibbānadhātu* appears in a number of texts (we will examine more such texts shortly), and there is also a related concept of *anupādāparinibbāna.* However, the canon *never* speaks of **sopādisesaparinibbāna, *sopādiparinibbāna, *saupādisesaparinibbāna, * saupādiparinibbāna, *sopādānaparinibbāna,* or **saupādānaparinibbāna;* the only place where it discusses anything of the sort is in Iti 44, the passage with which we started our discussion, and we can now see clearly just how anomalous that passage is.[874] As I will argue in more detail below, the notion of a *sôpadhiśeṣanirvāṇa* seems to be rather a kind of back-formation generated by the later tradition as a result of a shift in its understanding of *an-/nirupadhiśeṣanirvāṇa* whereby that term referred to a *type* of Nirvāṇa, and *sôpadhiśeṣa~* was thus conjured up as a phantom twin to that reading.

These distinctions between the Pāli-canonical and later understandings of *sopādisesa* and *anupadisesa* obviously mean that these concepts, in the Pāli context, have very little to do with ideas of embodiment, and therefore have little bearing on the history of such ideas except as the actual precedent for an idea that was eventually turned, by an interpretative twist, to the service of broader embodiment doctrines. We can, however, make two further observations about ways in which these ideas bear on embodiment. First, obviously, if *saupādisesa* means "a remainder of clinging *to further rebirths",* it also means (loosely) a remainder of *embodiment* after this lifetime, where *anupādi* implies that there will be no more embodiment at all. In this sense, the doctrine is of a piece with the generally negative attitude to embodiment we have observed in early Pāli materials. Second, however, we can speculate (though no text makes this connection directly) that if there *were* to be a corporeal concomitant to the state of *sopādisesa* as

[873] Miyamoto recognises this fact when he says that "a viewpoint that sees an imperfect mind in which there remains some attachment as belonging to the domain of *nibbāna* is not usually recognised in primitive Buddhist scripture"; 35. So too does Fujita, 7-8.

[874] *Pace* Watanabe, infra; see the preceding n. 872. Miyamoto clearly perceives this problem with Watanabe's argument; see Miyamoto 46 n. 14.

it is commonly understood in the Pāli materials, it would not be that a person, after attaining full awakening in this lifetime, has a residue of embodiment in their ordinary given human body. Rather, given that (a) *sopādisesa* most commonly refers to the status of the Non-Returner; (b) that the Non-Returner is called such because he is reincarnated in higher heavens rather than in the human realm;[875] and (c) that (as we have seen elsewhere) beings in higher heavens are generally understood, where their embodiment is discussed at all, to be embodied in *manomayakāya,* we can conjecture that the most likely bodily concomitant of *sopādisesa* status is embodiment *after* physical death in this lifetime in a *manomayakāya* – a very different picture from that given by the later doctrine of (Skt.) *sôpadhiśeṣa.*

Whence, then, arises the eventual interpretation of *sôpadhiśeṣa-* and *nirupadhiśeṣanirvāṇa* (to use the Sanskrit terms, since that understanding is more commonly found in Sanskrit texts and related translation texts)? I have saved until the end of my presentation a number of canonical passages that seem to have served in various ways as partial precedents for the eventual reworking of these terms. I will close this section of my study with a consideration of those passages, which I will use to reconstruct a speculative model of at least part of the developmental logic that underlies the shift in the direction of the corporeal reading of these terms, before turning briefly to the consideration of some post-canonical evidence for the later shift in meaning towards the "corporeal" reading.

3.4.5 Towards corporeal readings of *anupādisesa*

When we turn our attention to ideas in the Pāli canon that may have served as partial precedents for the later "corporeal" reading of *sôpadhiśeṣa-* and *nirupadhiśeṣanirvāṇa,* we are

[875] That the doctrine of the Non-Returner, who is reborn in a world presumably more conducive to pursuit of the final goal and closer to it, forms in this respect an antecedent for Pure Land doctrine.

forced to consider a scattered collection of materials originally only loosely related among themselves.

One precedent for the eventual classical corporeal doctrine of *sopādisesanibbāna,* which may be early, is found in DN 1, the *Brahmajāla-sutta* (however, it appears near the very end and does not seem integrally linked to the text around it; it could conceivably have been tacked on the end of the text late):

> "Monks, the body of the Tathāgata stands (*tiṭṭhati*, "continues/endures") with the link that bound it to becoming cut. As long as the body subsists (*yāvassa kāyo ṭhassati*), *devas* and humans will see him. But at the breaking up of the body (*kāyassa bhedā*) and the exhaustion of the life-span, *devas* and humans will see him no more. Monks, just as when the stalk of a bunch of mangoes has been cut, all the mangoes on it go with it, just so the Tathāgata's link with becoming has been cut. As long as the body subsists, *devas* and humans will see him. But at the breaking up of the body and the exhaustion of the life-span, *devas* and humans will see him no more."[876]

This is the only instance of this passage, with reference to the Tathāgata, in the Pāli canon. Of course, there is in this text no link between this doctrine about the persistence of the Tathāgata's physical body and the notion of a "remainder" or *sesa*. Nonetheless, the passage is significant for at least two reasons. First, in the context of our general history of doctrines of embodiment in Buddhism, it is significant in its own right for its clear demonstration of the fact that the Tathāgata's liberation was understood in some texts of Pāli Buddhism as entailing a cutting of the bond to the body, where the body is clearly understood as a kind of fetter binding a being to *saṃsāra*. Second, however, and more importantly here, it shows that even if the idea of this lingering last physical body was not yet tied to the notion of the "remainder of clinging" (*upādisesa*), as in later doctrine, the status of that lingering physical body was already a problem

[876] Walshe 90: *ucchinnabhavanettiko bhikkhave tathāgatassa kāyo tiṭṭhati. yāvassa kāyo ṭhassati, tāva naṃ dakkhinti devamanussā. kāyassa bhedā uddhaṃ jīvitapariyādānā na naṃ dakkhinti devamanussā. seyyathāpi bhikkhave ambapiṇḍiyā vaṇṭacchinnāya yāni kānici ambāni vaṇṭapaṭibaddhāni, sabbāni tāni tadanvayāni bhavanti, evameva kho bhikkhave ucchinnabhavanettiko tathāgatassa kāyo tiṭṭhati. yāvassa kāyo ṭhassati, tāva naṃ dakkhinti devamanussā. kāyassa bhedā uddhaṃ jīvitapariyādānā na naṃ dakkhinti devamanussā'ti.*

that had attracted attention, and further, that the understanding of the status of that body that was woven into later interpretations of the notion of the remainder already existed.

In light of the connections that later arose between the status of the Tathāgata's body between the moment of his awakening and his physical death, however, it is worth noting that the above formula (minus the conceit of the mangoes) is found one more time in the Pāli canon, but in application to beings other than the Tathāgata – it is applied, in fact, to none other than the category of those "liberated without remainder" in AN 7.6.52, "Tissa", already cited above.[877] This association seems to set up a link, albeit an indirect one, between the fact that a fully liberated being's body remains visible for the rest of their final lifetime, on the one hand, and the concept of "without remainder" (*anupādisesa*), on the other; to this extent, it may constitute another partial precedent for the eventual "corporeal" reading.

A second set of materials that may have prepared the ground for a "corporeal" reworking of the notion of *upādi/upadhi* is found in a formula in which we encounter for the first time (in my presentation here, but not necessarily in the chronology of the canon) the notion of "having no *remnant of* clinging" (*anupādisesa*), used in reference specifically to *parinibbāna* as the *physical death* of the Tathāgata and, more rarely, other perfected persons. This formula is the phrase "[to] attain *parinibbāna* in the Nibbāna element without any remnant of attachment" (*anupādisesāya nibbānadhātuyā parinibbāyati*). In the case of the application of this formula to the Tathāgata, especially, it is always clear that it is used specifically to denote the decisive moment referred to in the DN 1 passage above, when the physical visible body "breaks up" and the Tathāgata makes the transition to being invisible to gods and men; that is to say, it is consistently used for the final passing of the Tathāgata's last physical body. This suggests that

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[877] See AN 7.6.52, "Tissa", above p. 390.

there may be a connection between the use of *parinibbāna* in this more specialised sense and the application of the notion of "remnant" (*sesa*) to a state of "no clinging" (*anupadā/anupādi*).[878] Let us first marshal the relevant passages, before considering their possible significance for doctrinal development.

In DN 16, the *Mahāparinibbāna-sutta,* the phrase is used several times, always in this same meaning. For instance, we are told that the eighth reason that the earth may quake portentously is that "when the Tathāgata gains the Nibbāna-element without remainder (*yadā tathāgato anupādisesāya nibbānadhātuyā parinibbāyati*), the earth shudders and shakes and violently quakes."[879] Later, one of two occasions on which "the Tathāgata's skin appears especially clear and bright", so that it is "even brighter than the golden robes in which it is clothed", is "the night when he attains the Nibbāna-element without remainder at his final passing (*yamakasālānaṃ tathāgatassa parinibbānaṃ bhavissati*)"; the other such occasion being his attainment of supreme enlightenment.[880] So, too, in the same text, the same two occasions are those on which alms-giving bear the greatest fruit.[881] Even later in the same text, this phrasing is used to describe the deathplace of the Tathāgata as one of the four sites of pilgrimage "the sight of which should arouse emotion in the faithful".[882]

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[878] As noted above n. 869, *parinibbāna* is very commonly used interchangeably with simple *nibbāna* n the Pāli canon, and does not necessarily refer to the physical death of a liberated being, as in its more specialised and better-recognised usage. That latter usage is also plentifully attested.

[879] Walshe 248; repeated at AN 8.8.70, "On Earthquakes", Woodward and Hare IV, 209-210.

[880] Walshe 260.

[881] Walshe 261. This assertion is repeated at *Udāna* 8.5 "Cunda", Masefield 171-172.

[882] Walshe 263. This chunk of text is repeated as a small *sutta* of its own at AN 4.12.118, Woodward and Hard II, 124-125.

This same phrase is also found in other texts, in the same meaning.[883] In a list of the peerless powers and virtues of the Tathāgata in DN 29 the *Pāsādika-sutta,* we are told that "whatever he proclaims, says or explains is so and not otherwise" in the entire course of his preaching career; the latter is expressed by the formula "between the night in which the Tathāgata gains supreme enlightenment and the night in which he attains the Nibbāna-element without remainder".[884] This statement is repeated in Iti 112, "The World Sutta".[885]

The phrase is also occasionally used with reference to beings other than the Tathāgata himself:[886] at AN 8.2.19, "Pahārāda", it is taught that just as many streams flowing into the ocean and the rains falling into it from the sky make no difference to the fullness of the ocean, so too, though many monks attaining to the *parinirvāna* in the element of Nibbāna that is without a remnant of attachment (*anupādisesāya nibbānadhātuyā parinibbāyanti*) do not add to or

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[883] Note that the preceding footnotes already list several parallels to the DN 16 passages. The sources discussed here are also noted, along with several in the *Jātakas* and the *Cullaniddesa* of the Vinaya, by Miyamoto 46 n. 13.

[884] Walshe 436: *yañca . . . rattiṃ tathāgato anuttaraṃ sammāsambodhiṃ abhisambujjhati, yañca rattiṃ anupādisesāya nibbānadhātuyā parinibbāti, yaṃ etamasmiṃ antare.*

[885] Masefield 112.

[886] We have no particular grounds for certainty that this application of the formula necessarily refers to the moment of final physical death of the *nibbāyin,* since the doctrine expressed in these passages would make equal sense if *parinibbāna* referred to a moment of spiritual realisation *within* their last lifetime; but given the more common application of this formula to the physical death of the Tathāgata, it seems most economical to assume that it has the same meaning in these passages also.

take away from that element.[887] The same formula is repeated in the next *sutta,* AN 8.2.20,[888] and in *Udāna* 5.5, "Uposatha".[889]

The next question, of course, is: What part exactly did this formula play in the development of the concepts towards the "corporeal" reading? Here I come to my most serious disagreement with Miyamoto Shōson in the interpretation of the Pāli materials; I find it difficult to agree with Miyamoto's claims about the place of this formula in the overall development of the interpretation of the concepts of *saupādisesa-* and *anupādisesa*. In brief, Miyamoto argues that the concept expressed in this formula, which he refers to by his own shorthand as [*]*anupādisesanibbānadhātu*[890] was first developed in order to be able to give a positive description of the state of the *nibbāyin* (one who has attained Nibbāna) after death.[891] Miyamoto imagines, that is to say, that this locution was developed as an antidote to the well-documented danger of an overly nihilistic understanding of the state of the Tathāgata after his final physical death.[892] In this connection, Miyamoto makes much of the fact that the term here

[887] Woodward and Hare IV, 139, translation modified: *evam eva kho pahārāda, bahu cepi bhikkhū anupādisesāya nibbānadhātuyā parinibbāyanti. na tena nibbānadhātuyā ūnattaṃ vā pūrattaṃ vā paññāyati. yampi pahārāda, bahū cepi bhikkhū anūpādisesāya nibbānadhātuyā parinibbāyanti, na tena nibbānadhātuyā ūnattaṃ vā pūrattaṃ vā paññāyati.*

[888] Woodward and Hare IV, 142.

[889] Masefield, *Udāna* 98.

[890] 無余涅槃界; such a term does not in fact appear until the paracanonical literature.

[891] Miyamoto 37-38, repeated at 41. Fujita, "*Nibbāna* to *parinibbāna*", also follows Miyamoto in this regard, and this speculation plays an excessively large part in his account of the development of these two concepts generally.

[892] Miyamoto 46 n. 15.

includes the notion of *dhātu* or "domain, state, sphere".[893] Plausible though this argument may seem at first blush, I believe it is prey to a number of difficulties.

Miyamoto does not adequately consider the clearly related term *anupādāparinibbāna.* This term and the passages containing it, however, do not make use of the notion of *dhātu,* which makes it difficult to argue, in the case of that term at least, that some systematic distinction is being made between *nibbāna* as the state of spiritual release to which the term usually refers and a putative "state" that is confined to post-mortem experience. Moreover, as we saw above in our study of *anupādāparinibbāna,* the general thrust of that concept has nothing to do with the description of any post-mortem state, but rather is consistently associated with attempts to make clear the reasons that a person would undertake the religious life recommended by the Buddha. Indeed, in the most extended description of *anupādāparinibbāna* at AN 7.6.52, not only do we find no indication that the state so called is supposed to be post-mortem, but on the contrary, it is specifically stated that it is attained in this life (*diṭṭheva dhamme*). In addition, as we already noted above, the concept of *anupādāparinibbāna* that emerges from these passages is entirely in keeping with the regular twofold opposition that is posited in many places in the canon between realisation of wisdom in the visible here-and-now (*diṭṭheva dhamme aññā*) and the presence of only a vestige of clinging, which occasions the destiny of the Non-Returner. Miyamoto thus fails to consider the fact that we have available to us, via the notion of *anupādāparinibbāna,* a perfectly natural reading of *anupādisesāya nibbānadhātuyā parinibbāyanti* in the terms of the dominant Pāli-canonical understandings of *upādi* and *sesa,* that is, to read it as meaning "to become completely extinguished/unbound in the realm of unbinding that is

893 "In this case [of the formula *anupādisesāya nibbānadhātuyā parinibbāyati*], [the term] [*]*anupādisesanibbānadhātu* is without fail used with reference to that world into which a person who has realised *nibbāna* in this lifetime enters upon extinction, that is to say, [it is used] to mean *the post-mortem realm* of those who attain *nibbāna* [i.e. *nibbāyin*], and expresses the fact that this *post-mortem realm* is neither reincarnation (輪廻する, *saṃsarati)* nor annihilation (無に帰する), but rather a positive state (境地);" Miyamoto 37, emphases in original. See also 39-40.

devoid of all vestiges of clinging to future rebirth", in other words, as emphasising that this "complete *nibbāna*" is final – it is without remainder in the simple sense that what is to be done is done, the round of rebirth is finished, and so forth. Finally, Miyamoto fails to note or account for the fact that the formula is used of beings other than the Tathāgata, which fact makes less plausible his claim that the formula is elaborated as a way of articulating positively the post-mortem destiny of the Tathāgata in particular.

For these reasons, it seems to me that the description of the passing of the Tathāgata in terms of the formula *anupādisesāya nibbānadhātuyā parinibbāyanti* probably emerged not because of the kind of concerted Buddhalogical programme that Miyamoto proposes, but rather as part of a larger pattern of gradual coalescence and mutual influence between a wider constellation of loosely interrelated notions. Before I can lay out in full the model I propose of this process, however, it remains to add, to the two components we have considered so far, a third tangential relation between the notion of *saupādi* and various (apparent) "kinds of" *parinibbāna,* which emerges in another set of partially related formulae.

A third possible factor behind the fact that the terms *nirupadhiśeṣa* and *sôpadhiśeṣa* eventually came to be used to refer to "kinds of *nirvāṇa*" may thus lie in the fact that the Non-Returner, who as we have seen is closely associated with there being a *sopādisesa* in the Pāli materials, is regularly described in terms of the manner in which he or she attains *parinibbāna.* In one standard and widely attested passage, the Non-Returner is described thus: "[e.g. a monk who] has abandoned the five lower fetters takes a spontaneous rebirth (*opapātiko*) [in a higher sphere] and, without returning from that world, gains [final] enlightenment (*parinibbāyī*)."[894] This

[894] *orambhāgiyānaṃ saṃyojanānaṃ parikkhayā opapātiko hoti tatthaparinibbāyī anāvattidhammo tasmā lokā*; var. *orambhāgiyānaṃ saññojanānaṃ parikkhayā opapātiko bhavissati, tattha parinibbāyī anāvattidhammā tasmā lokā*, var. *pañcannaṃ orambhāgiyānaṃ saññojanānaṃ parikkhāya opapātiko hoti tattha parinibbāyī anāvattidhammo tasmā lokā.* This is Walshe's translation; see e.g. DN 6, Walshe 145. Examples of this formula cited in the

formula is used in several different connections. First, in its most simple context, it is used in contrast only with full Arhatship, which is described as the destruction of the taints.[895] (It is notable that in all versions of this formula, the description of the "Non-Returner", the name "Non-Returner" is not given to one of this attainment, even though, in the fourfold schema in passages I will quote immediately, terms for other kinds of attainment are in fact used.) In some texts that presupposed this twofold opposition, the status of Non-Returner seems to be specially associated with lay followers, where the attainment of Arhatship is spoken of as if it is more typical of monks and nuns.[896] Sometimes, however, the same formula is found as part of the better-known rubric of "four fruits" of practice, i.e. Arhat, Non-Returner, Once-Returner, and Stream-Enterer.[897]

following are only from DN and MN and are not therefore exhaustive; further examples of this formula can be found in AN etc.

[895] The full formula to describe the Non-Returner is repeatedly contrasted only with the immediate attainment of the destruction of the taints (i.e. full Arhatship, cf. the contrast with *diṭṭheva dhamme aññā*) at MN 52 *Aṭṭhakanāgara-sutta*, Ñāṇamoli 454-558. So too at MN 64, *Mahāmālunkyaputta-sutta*, Ñāṇamoli 436-437.

[896] In MN 73, the *Mahāvacchagotta-sutta*, this fruit of the religious life is assigned specifically to male and female lay followers of the Buddha, where Arhatship is spoken of for monks and nuns; Ñāṇamoli 596, 597. There seems to be a special connection between this spiritual status and a lay follower also in MN 81, the *Ghaṭīkāra-sutta*, Ñāṇamoli 674. Similarly, Non-Returner status is prophesied for the brahmin Brahmāyu at the end of MN 91, the *Brahmāyu-sutta*; Ñāṇamoli 754.

[897] DN 6, *Mahāli-sutta*, Walshe 145; DN 29, *Pāsādika-sutta*, Walshe 434-435. The same formula is used for the state of the Non-Returner (as are the same formulae repeated for the other three fruits) in a DN 16 *Mahāparinibbāna-sutta* passage in which the Tathāgata describes the post-mortem fate of various monks and nuns whom Ānanda asks about, Walshe 240; the same assertion repeated at *Janavasabha-sutta,* DN 18, Walshe 291, 292. They are also repeated among a list of ways in which the Tathāgata's teaching is unsurpassed in DN 28 ,the *Sampasādanīya-sutta*, under the head of "modes of receptivity to instruction", Walshe 421; and immediately thereafter, in describing the fact that the Buddha is unsurpassed in his practice of prophesying the spiritual attainments of those he observes, Walshe 422. The difference between these four classes of realised persons is laid out in these same words, but with embellishment by an analogy to a herd of cattle fording the Ganges, MN 34 *Cūḷagopālaka-sutta*, Ñāṇamoli 320-321. For further examples, see *Mahāgovina-sutta*, DN 19, Walshe 313; *Alagaddūpama-sutta,* MN 22, Ñāṇamoli 235; *Naḷakapāna-sutta,* MN 68, Ñāṇamoli 568, 570; *Ānāpānasati-sutta,* MN 118, Ñāṇamoli 942; etc.

The association this formula sets up between the status of the Non-Returner and the concept of *parinibbāna* is further strengthened by other passages in which five different grades of Non-Returner are also distinguished in terms of the manner in which (lapse of time and effort with which) they attain *parinibbāna,* a rubric we have already had occasion to discuss above.[898] Once more, the term is *parinibbāyin,* "characterised by [the possession of an X type of] *parinibbāna*": the Pāli terms for four the five categories of Non-Returner, with Bodhi's translations, are *antarāparinibbāyī* ("attainer of Nibbāna in the interval")*, upahaccaparinibbāyī* ("attainer of Nibbāna upon landing")*, asaṃkhāraparinibbāyī* ("attainer of Nibbāna without exertion")*, sasaṃkhāraparibbāyī* ("attainer of Nibbāna with exertion")*,* and *uddhaṃsoto akaniṭṭhagāmī* ("one bound upstream, heading towards the Akaniṭṭha realm")*.*[899]

For our purposes here, the important point is that the idea that the lucky adept will certainly attain *parinibbāna* in the Pure Abodes is consistently expressed, as in the example passage cited above, by saying that they are one "of (or characterised by) *parinibbāna* there": *tattha parinibbāyin*. The particular reference here to the notion of *parinibbāna* (still in a future existence, let us note) is of course entirely comprehensible within the Non-Returner model, and therefore entirely consistent with what I am here arguing is the mainstream Pāli-canonical interpretation of *saupādisesa* to refer to beings still destined for such vestigial future rebirth. However, the characterisation of classes of persons in terms of the *parinibbāna* they possess or are characterised by, which is a clear possible implication of the *-in* suffix, also opens the door

[898] We have already encountered these five types above; see p. 396. For instances of this formula and its various applications, see passages already cited in n. 844. Miyamoto notes the possibility the association set up between *parinibbāna* and the Non-Returner by this rubric was a factor in the eventual shift of the term *sôpadhiśeṣa* to mean a kind of *nirvāṇa,* 40; my interpretation, however, differs from his in important details.

[899] DN 33, *Saṅgīti-sutta,* Walshe 496. Walshe's translation obscures this point, since he does not give any English equivalent for the *parinibbāyin* element in the terms at all. See above, n. 846, for a discussion of various translators' attempts to deal with these terms, and p. 397 for Bhikkhu Bodhi's interpretation, which I follow.

to the idea that there exist multiple types *of* (*pari-*)*nibbāna itself,* and the various beings called –*parinibbāyin* are distinct in virtue of their respective possession of those different types of *parinibbāna.*

For this reason, I suggest, the characterisation of the Non-Returner as a *parinibbāyin,* and the further development of a typology of Non-Returners that distinguished them as types of *parinibbāyin,* was an additional factor that prepared the ground for the shift into the "corporeal" rereading of these terms. Considered in concert, these various passages show that there was already in the Pāli canon a strong tendency to define the category of Non-Returner in terms of a relation to *parinibbāna.* On the other hand, as we already know from our survey of other passages above, there was also a concept of "having a remnant of clinging" (*sopādisesa*). Once these doctrines are in place, we have, in the Non-Returner, a single doctrinal category that functions as a kind of hinge joining the notion of *saupādisesa* on the one hand to the nascent notion of "types of" (*pari-*)*nibbāna.* At a certain point, it seems, the hinge itself fell away, but the concepts associated with it on either side remained conjoined, and a new interpretation was found upon which *saupādisesa* itself was directly *a type of nibbāna.*

The materials that we have surveyed so far in this section thus show that there already existed, in the Pāli materials, (1) two passages that establish a tangential link between the concept of *anupādisesa* and the status of the Tathāgata's body between liberation and death; (2) a formula that spoke of the Tathāgata's *parinibbāna* in terms of entry into an *anupādisesā nibbānadhātu*; (3) formulae that defined the Non-Returner, or types of Non-Returner, in terms of (the relation to) *parinibbāna,* and thus an indirect link between the *parinibbāna* of the Non-Returner and the notion of *saupādisesa,* which also characterises Non-Returners. The natural question to ask, therefore, is what part each of these notions played in the eventual emergence of the

"corporeal" rereading of *upādisesa,* and how far the process leading to that rereading develops in the Pāli materials.

Without any prejudice as to the question of the actual chronological relations between the various texts concerned, therefore,[900] it seems to me that at least considered in terms of their likely logical interrelation, the most plausible account of the development of all the various related notions discussed thus far is as follows. (1) Realisation in the here-and-now was opposed to the destiny of the Once-Returner where a vestige of clinging remained. (2) The goal of the Buddhist path was, for whatever independent reasons, described in other passages as *anupādāparinibbāna.* (3) In another possibly independent development, the practice developed of referring to the physical death of the Buddha as *parinibbāna.*[901] (4) Influenced by the fact that *parinibbāna* is characterised as *anupādā* in some passages, on the one hand, and that beings destined to some further rebirth were referred to as *saupādisesa,* on the other, a formula was coined which further described the *parinibbāna* of the Tathāgata as *anupādisesa.* (5) Via the intermediary categories of the Non-Returner and five types thereof, an indirect association was established between *saupādisesa* and apparent typologies of *nibbāna;* thus paving the way, when that intermediary notion fell away, for a direct association in a concept of *saupādisesā nibbānadhatu* etc.[902] (6) Once these various elements were in place, the way was clear for the eventual rise of a fairly standard opposition between *sopādisesanibbānadhātu* and *anupādisesnibbāndhātu*. As we observed above, however, at least so long as the element *upādi-*

[900] For my reasons for refraining from entering too closely into questions of relative dating regarding these materials, see above n. 840.

[901] On this development, see e.g. Fujita, "*Nibbāna* to *parinibbāna*" 5-7.

[902] Fujita points out this probably step in the developmental logic behind the opposition of *sopādisesanibbānadhātu* and *an~*, 9. He notes that the fact that mentions of *anupādisesanibbānadhātu* far outnumber mentions of the *saupādisesa~* equivalent probably means the former preceded the latter. (Unfortunately, he does not extend this same logic to the problem of the real origins of notions of *sesa, saupādisesa, *anupādi- = anupādā* etc., or he might have been able to avoid the distortions occasioned by centring his analysis excessively on the anomalous doctrine of Iti 44, as noted already above n. 813.)

refers to clinging to rebirth, there are serious problems with positing a kind of *nibbāna* in which there is *any* remnant of *upādi*. This inconsistency may have functioned as a tension that also contributed to (7) the eventual reinterpretation of these terms so that *upādi/upadhi* referred rather to the *object* of clinging, that is, the body of the five *skandhas*, and thus to the reinterpretation of the opposition between *sôpadhiśeṣanirvāṇa* and *nirupadhiśeṣanirvāṇa* along the lines of the "corporeal" model.

With this final step in our speculative reconstruction of the developmental logic governing the relations between the various notions studied here, we have come almost full circle, back to the otherwise anomalous meaning of these terms in the Iti 44 passage with which we began. As I argued above, however, even in Iti 44, however, which traditional accounts have taken as paradigmatic even for the Pāli-canonical understandings of these notions, there are inconsistencies both internal and with the later standard "corporeal" rereading, and it is not possible to say that the full-fledged corporeal model is found *anywhere* in the Pāli-canonical materials. In this light, Iti 44 looks rather like a partially botched prototype of the later "corporeal" reading, in which various design bugs (such as the problem of which term maps onto the here-and-now and which onto future existences) have yet to be ironed out. In order to find the fully-fledged corporeal model, we will have to look beyond the Pāli canon, an exercise to which I turn, in preliminary fashion, immediately below.

Before turning to that exercise, however, let us pause briefly to return to my disagreement with Miyamoto about the origin of the concept of **anupādisesanibbānadhātu.* With all elements of the larger constellation of elements I believe contributed to the eventual emergence of the "corporeal" reading now in place, it is possible to show that my reconstruction of the overall logic leading towards the "corporeal" rereading, while admittedly speculative, has the

following principal advantage over the interpretation suggested by Miyamoto: it accounts for the origin of the concept of *anupādisesa* itself; and it accomplishes this without needing to resort to speculative Buddhalogical programmes for which we have no textual evidence. It is worth noting, in this connection, that in the many passages we observed above, the numerous independent mentions of *saupādisesa,* as opposed to the virtual absence of a notion of *anupādisesa,* makes it look likely that in fact, *saupādisesa* developed first of the two, and was initially most typically opposed not to a morphologically opposed *anupādisesa,* but to the concept of *diṭṭheva dhamme aññā.* One thing that needs accounting for, therefore, is the development of a notion of *anupādisesanibbāna per se*. It seems logical enough, as I argued above in discussing *anupādānibbāna,* that the absence of grasping itself (to continued reincarnational existence etc.) would be associated with (*pari*)*nibbāna,* since the two are almost definitionally identical. But when we remove the lens of the later corporeal reading, in which it is possible have some "kind of *nibbāna*" that is only partial and in which there is a "remainder" of something unliberated, there is no need to include the notion of a "remnant" or "vestige" in a description of *nibbāna* as a state without clinging. There is only one possible way the absence of clinging and *nibbāna* can be related: if the absence of clinging is any less than complete, it would not be *nibbāna* – end of story. It seems to me, then, that the only way we can account for the development of *anupādisesa* is via this hypothetical cross-fertilisation of *anupādā* (= *anupādi*) as a characterisation of *parinibbāna* and *saupādisesa*, a concept whose original application is only tangentially related to *nibbāna* at all.

3.4.6 Beyond the Pāli materials

Turning, then, to materials beyond the Pāli canon and the historical period it represents, it is still difficult to determine exactly where the "corporeal" reading might have originated, as we can see by a survey of the most easily accessible later sources. Miyamoto Shōson surveys

passages in the Chinese Āgamas that mention the concepts of *sa-* and *anupadhiśeṣa.* A small number of these passages may show the ideas of *sôpadhiśeṣa-* and *nirupadhiśeṣanirvāṇadhātu* shifting partially in the direction of what is usually thought of as the "more standard" reading that relates to modes of embodiment (or non-embodiment), though on the whole, they are surprisingly conservative.

Guṇabhadra's *Saṃyuktâgama* (T99) shows a conflicted understanding of the relation between the odd concept of *sôpadhiśeṣanirvāṇa* and realisation in this very lifetime. In a translation of the pericope corresponding to the plentifully attested SN doctrine of two possible fruits of various practices cited above, those two fruits are referred to as "realisation of wisdom in the visible here-and-now (= *diṭṭheva dhamme aññā*), *viz.*, **sôpadhiśeṣanirvāṇa,* or the fruit of the Non-Returner (*anāgamin*)" (現法智有餘涅槃及阿那含果; my emphasis).[903] Similarly, in a translation of the expanded similar rubric of the seven fruits, the first, which is once more *diṭṭheva dhamme aññā,* is referred to as *sôpadhiśeṣanirvāṇa.*[904] These passages clearly reflect an understanding of *sôpadhiśeṣa* that is almost diametrically opposed to that we found in the usual Pāli-canonical usages of the term above, where *sôpadhiśeṣa* has come to refer specially to only the state of immediate realisation in the here-and-now (which there was associated with *anupādisesa*), presumably by a shift of meaning that has it refer to "a vestigial *object of* clinging" = the lingering physical body, understood as the *skandhas.*

However, as Miyamoto shows, this understanding is not consistent even within this one text. Another translation of the same pericope about two fruits of practice calls *diṭṭheva dhamme aññā*

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[903] T99.197a11-13; Miyamoto 39.

[904] 當得七果。何等爲七。謂現法智有餘涅槃。及命終時。若不爾者。五下分結盡。得中般涅槃。若不爾者。得生般涅槃。若不爾者。得無行般涅槃。若不爾者。得有行般涅槃。若不爾者。得上流般涅槃; T99.197a22-27, Miyamoto 39.

"*nirvāṇa without* remainder or outflows", reflecting the older understanding of that term;[905] and another passage referring to the rubric of the seven fruits mentions neither concept.[906] A similar, older understanding would seem to underlie the regularisation of Vaṇgīsa's question in the portion of the same SA translation corresponding to SuN 2.12 in terms of *sôpadhiśeṣanirvāṇa* and *nirupadhiśeṣanirvāṇa.*[907]

It turns out that the older understanding is more common in other Āgama references to these concepts also. Saṃghadeva's (fl. 383-398) *Ekottarâgama* T125 contains a passage that contrasts *sôpadhiśeṣa-* and *anupadhiśeṣanirvāṇadhātu.*[908] Although the passage in question corresponds to the anomalous Iti 44[909] (already studied above), it is ironic to note that here, the EA text is in fact more conservative doctrinally, since it seems to have corrected the Iti text to conform to the mainstream Pāli-canonical doctrines studied above.[910] The equation of *sopādisesa* with the Non-Returner is made in EA, where it is not in Iti; the extensive definition of complete liberation, which is applied evenly to both in Iti, is applied only to the **anupādisesanibbānin* in EA, presumably because of the inconsistency that would otherwise arise with the status of Non-Returner, who still has some reincarnational destiny ahead.[911] The only other passage that Miyamoto finds that poses the contrast explicitly is found in the 本事經 T765. Here, however,

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[905] 現法得漏盡無餘涅槃。或得阿那含果; T99.196c01-03, Miyamoto 39.

[906] T99.196c12-19.

[907] T99.333a07-08; cited in a different connection at Miyamoto 41.

[908] T125.579a13-22.

[909] According to both the Taishō editors and Miyamoto.

[910] Miyamoto briefly notes this inconsistency with the doctrine of Iti 44, 39.

[911] This leads to a situation in which the application of the concept of *nirvāṇadhātu* to **sôpadhiśeṣa* is completely incoherent, of course, and that term is the only vestige of the anomalous doctrine that informs the entire Iti passage.

though the basic doctrine of *nirupadhisesa* seems in conformity with Iti 44 (with additions, including a *catuṣkoṭi* twist[912]), the explanation given of *sôpadhiśeṣa* is quite singular;[913] its peculiarities of detail aside, however, it is once more in keeping with the Pāli-canonical standard *sopādisesa=anāgamin* reading than with any corporeal reading.

Regardless of their date, therefore, these latter passages do not help us trace the change of these concepts in a more corporeal doctrine, since they are here not given such an interpretation. Unfortunately, even the more innovative doctrines found in some of the passages from Guṇabhadra's *Saṃyuktâgama* may be of little help in this regard also. On the basis of the inconsistencies in this text noted above, Miyamoto suggests that the insertion of the terms *sôpadhiśeṣa* and **an/nir-upadhiśeṣa* is an artefact of translation, rather than a reflection of changes in the underlying Indic text.[914] Whether or not this is the case, however, we must bear in mind that the text from which these citations are taken, the T99 *Saṃyuktâgama,* is a translation by Guṇabhadra, and thus dates to the early fifth century;[915] the most we thus learn from this evidence is that a (partial) shift in the direction of a different understanding, which entailed in part the greater currency of *sôpadhiśeṣanirvāṇa,* took place some time before that date.

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[912] 不可謂有。不可謂無。不可謂彼亦有亦無。不可謂彼非有非無。惟可說爲不可施設究竟涅槃 etc. For the full description of **nirupadhiśeṣaparinirvāṇadhātu* according to this text, see T765.678a19-b07.

[913] "Mind still exists, along with pleasant and unpleasant sensations, but there is no longer any desire or aversion, because such fetters as desire and aversion have been permanently extirpated. The body, however, continues to exist in the world, [so that the person] has not yet [attained] *parinirvāṇa*, but is rather always reborn as a denizen of one of the heavens, where they worship and make offerings. This is called 'the realm of *parinirvāṇa* with a remnant of support'"; 雖復有意及好醜法。而無貪欲。亦無瞋恚。所以者何。愛恚等結。皆永斷故。乃至其身。相續住世。未般涅槃。常爲天人。瞻仰禮拜。恭敬供養。是名有餘依涅槃界, T765.678a16-19. It is not clear how a realm in which a being is explicitly stated not to have yet attained *parinirvāṇa* is nonetheless called by the name of a kind of *parinirvāṇa*!

[914] Miyamoto 39; though it is unclear to me why we should assume that Guṇabhadra is more likely to be doctrinally inconsistent than the unknown redactors of his Indic texts.

[915] See n. 2417.

When we turn beyond Miyamoto's *Āgama* passages to a selection of understudied mentions of these concepts in other early Chinese Buddhist texts, it turns out that there is still surprisingly little evidence to work with, but that it is possible to make some observations that go beyond those of scholars to date.

First, it is still possible to note a number of passages in the Chinese canon in which the older understanding, typical of the Pāli materials, persists. First, in many places, the term is used in a sense that clearly corresponds rather to *anupādāya nibbānadhātuyā parinibbāyati*,[916] which is not only consonant with the old Pāli-canonical understanding of *anupādisesa,* but also incidentally provides additional evidence that the notion of *nirupadhiśeṣanirvāṇadhātu* grew out of this context, as I suggested above. We also find the old understanding reflected in Mokṣala's *Prajñāpāramitā.*[917] In a passage in the *Dīrghâgama* of Buddhayaśas and Zhu Fonian, where the precise content of the concept is difficult to determine, it seems at least possible to determine

[916] This pattern begins perhaps earliest with the trans. of the *Akṣobhyavyūha* attributed to Lokakṣema: "[The Non-Returner] thereupon attains there [in the Pure Abode] to Parinirvāṇa in the **anupadhiśeṣanirvāṇadhātu*", 便於彼至無餘泥洹界般泥洹; T313.757a17-18. Harrison, "Earliest Chinese Translations" 166, suggests on stylistic grounds that this text "must be viewed with some suspicion", but that "it appears that T313 is either a translation by Lokakṣema which has been subsequently revised, or the work of one of his contemporaries and disciples. It is, however, certainly an old text." See also Mokṣala's *Praj.*, 盡令眾生於無餘泥洹而般泥洹, T221.19b11-12, T221.37b14; Dharmarakṣa's *Praj.*, T222.180c22-23, 24-25; Saṃghadeva's *Ekôttarâgama*, 以不度欲流・有流・見流・無明流。而欲得入無餘泥洹界而般泥洹者。此事不然, T125.578 b27-29 (note the odd fact that elsewhere in the same text we find *nirvāṇa* transcribed not 泥洹, as here, but 涅槃, e.g. T125.579a14); in the 出曜經 attributed to Zhu Fonian, 盡有漏成無漏於無餘泥洹得阿羅漢, T212.638c29-639a01; Zhu Fonian's 最勝問菩薩十住除垢斷結經, T309.1003c24-25 and four times 1039c26-1040a17; in Zhu Fonian's *Vinaya* 鼻奈耶 T1464.897c22-23, 898 b18.

[917] Speaking of "the four paths of monastic practice up to **nirupadhiśeṣanirvāṇa*", 沙門四道乃至無餘泥洹, T221.3b25; so that *nirupadhiśeṣanirvāṇa* is implicitly associated with arhatship (and, presumably, *sôp~* with the preceding stage of the Non-Returner).

that accession to *nirupadhiśeṣanirvāṇa* ensues in the Buddha's lifetime, and does not refer to his physical death, and the passage is also most likely therefore in tune with the old model.[918]

Alongside these reflections of the persistence of the "old" understanding, however, we also see the "corporeal" reading, and related interpretations, entering the Chinese record from quite early on and increasing over time, sometimes, indeed, in the very same texts just cited as host to the "old" interpretation. The earliest clear-seeming references to the "corporeal" an interpretation that I have been able to find, aside from the T99 passages already cited above and the **Mahāvibhāṣā* (to which I will return immediately), are as follows. In Mokṣala's *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā,* the concepts are paired in a way that makes it clear that it is understood that *sôpadhiśeṣa-* and *nirupadhiśeṣanirvāṇa* are understood as successive stages in the stereotyped biography of all Buddhas.[919] Similarly, a passage in Zhu Fonian's 最勝問菩薩十住除垢斷結經 T309 denies that none of the Buddhas of the three times ever entered into (*pari-*)*nirvāṇa,* and expresses this claim by saying that they "dither and tarry in *sôpadhiśeṣanirvāṇa,* and do not enter into the realm of *nirupadhiśeṣanirvāṇa*".[920] Kumārajīva's translation of the *Lotus* mentions the concept of *sôpadhiśeṣanirvāṇa* in a manner that makes it clear that it applies to the

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[918] The Buddha is maligned by saying that he fails in various points, among which is that he does not bring to perfection his *brahmacārya,* attain to a "place of peace" (Pāli *padaṃ santam*), and attain *nirupadhiśeṣanirvāṇa*: 迦葉。汝謂如來在大眾中勇捍無畏。乃至出家修道。而不究竟梵行。至安隱處。無餘泥洹耶。勿造斯觀。所以者何。如來於大眾中勇捍無畏。乃至出家修道。究竟梵行。至安隱處。無餘泥洹, T1.104b27-c02. The translators of this text were active c. 408-412. Note that in the corresponding Pāli text of the *Mahāsīhanāda-sutta* DN 8, which differs on many points of detail from the Chinese, there is no mention of the concept of *anupādisesa* at all; Walshe 156.

[919] 善男子。是教是過去當來今現在佛。從發意以來至得阿耨多羅三耶三菩。於有餘泥洹至無餘泥洹乃至法盡。於其中間行般若波羅蜜。所作功德及六波羅蜜。所可行三十七品。四禪四等及四空定。十種力十八法所作善本。及淨佛國教授眾生，T221.59a01-06.

[920] 三世諸佛世尊有名號以來吾未見有入泥洹者。正使將來諸佛出現法界。周旋止住有餘泥洹。不入無餘泥洹之境, T309.1014c22-24. Unebe notes that this text is already ascribed to Fonian by Sengyou, and considers it genuine, and probably to have been translated after 399; Unebe 34.

period in which an enlightened being still resides in their final body.[921] Kumārajīva's translation of the *Satyasiddhi,* likewise, equates *nirupadhiśeṣa* with the cessation of the "continuum of the *skandhas*".[922] Finally, and most extensively, there are a number of passages that mention the concept in the **Mahāprajñāpāramitā-śāstra,* some of which clearly also assume the later corporeal reinterpretation,[923] though in others it is difficult, for various reasons, to know what interpretation is being assumed.[924]

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[921] 住最後身/ 有餘涅槃 T262.18c04. It adds nothing to our investigation here that Jñānagupta repeats the same formula, T264.151b11. I find the explanation of the concept given at Kumārajīva's 中論, T1564.24c05-09, difficult to understand, and so I am not sure whether it reflects the corporeal reading or not.

[922] T1646.351a02-06, a14-15.

[923] For example, this seems clearly to be the case when the text says that an Arhat in his final body dwells in *sôpadhiśeṣanirvāṇa;* 阿羅漢末後身住有餘涅槃, T1509.564a19. Elsewhere, *sôpadhiśeṣa* is said to entail the abandonment of the *kleśas,* as the causes and conditions for the five *skandhas,* and *nirupadhiśeṣa* the abandonment of the five *skandhas* as result; 有二種捨。一者有餘涅槃中。捨五眾因緣諸煩惱。二者入無餘涅槃中。捨五眾果 T1509.491a06-08. This, too, seems clearly to assume the "corporeal" understanding of the terms. In another passage, *sôpadhiśeṣanirvāṇa* is defined as the cessation of the *kleśas,* and *nirupadhiśeṣa~* with the fact that "the five *skandhas* appropriated by the Arhat in this life will never again be appropriated in future", 有涅槃是第一寶無上法。是有二種。一者有餘涅槃。二無餘涅槃。愛等諸煩惱斷。是名有餘涅槃。聖人今世所受五眾盡更不復受。是名無餘涅槃, T1509.288c04-07; on its own, this passage seems ambiguous to me in terms of the distinction between the older reading and the newer corporeal interpretation, but in light of the former passage, it most likely also assumes the corporeal interpretation. The same association is adduced at T1509.518a23-b01 in the course of a discussion of the reason that we speak of "purification", "cessation of the *kleśas*", etc., when in fact, in the perspective of ultimate truth (第一義, *paramârtha*), there is no such thing; the primary reason, it seems, is because otherwise there would be no field of merit (*puṇyakṣetra*), and the text goes on to say that a person is a supreme field of merit in virtue of the fact that they attain *sôpadhiśeṣanirvāṇa* (得有餘涅槃故。是畢定福田; the connection between *upadhi* and the economy of merit posited here is very interesting indeed). *Sôpadhiśeṣa* is also associated briefly with the cessation of *kleśas* at T1509.287c28-29, and at T1509.720c10.

[924] One passage, though it does not clearly betray whether or not the interpretation is corporeal, seems to see the two kinds of *nirvāṇa* as sequentially related for the same person: 問曰。今何以故名解脫門。答曰。行是法時。得解脫到無餘涅槃。以是故名解脫門。無餘涅槃是真解脫。於身心苦得脫。有餘涅槃爲作門, T1509.206c29-207a04. Roughly the same would seem to be true at T1509.643b20-24, where a question about various states in which no mental *dharmas* arise lists among various such states "when a realised person 聖人 dwelling in the state of *sôpadhiśeṣanirvāṇa* enters into *nirodhasamāpatti*" (聖人住有餘涅槃入滅盡定; . The concept is merely mentioned, without gloss, in the following: 二種涅槃有餘涅槃無餘涅槃; T1509.195a21-22. The two kinds of *nirvāṇa* are oddly related by creative hermeneutics to different contemplation practices at T1509.232c13. I cannot understand the application of these two concepts to a complex discussion of various practices of purification, T1509.507b11-12.

To complicate the picture still further, some texts wield these concepts in ways that are difficult to relate to either of the primary interpretations under discussion here. For example, a fascinating passage in Zhu Fonian's *Pusa yingluo jing* 菩薩瓔珞經[925] claims that the Buddha, having reached *anuttarasaṃyaksaṃbodhi,* dwells *both* in *sôpadhiśeṣa* and *nirupadhiśeṣanirvāṇa,* and further relates the former aspect of his Janus-faced condition to his possession of the **rūpakāya* of the thirty-two marks![926] A passage in Kumārajīva's translation of the *Satyasiddhi* posits an unusual correlation between *sôpadhiśeṣanirvāṇa* and the cessation of impure *mental* activity, and between *nirupadhiśeṣa* and the total cessation of all mental activity.[927] In yet other texts, it is difficult to tell what is meant or understood by these concepts at all.[928]

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925 Unebe notes that this text is already ascribed to Fonian by Sengyou, and thinks it was translated after 399; Unebe 34.

926 今問如來至真等正覺。爲在有餘泥洹。爲在無餘泥洹。佛言。我今亦在有餘泥洹。亦在無餘泥洹。法造菩薩白佛言。世尊。云何亦在有餘泥洹。亦在無餘泥洹。佛言。如我三十二相成此色身。則有餘泥洹。觀過去諸佛如恒沙數無形不可見。則是無餘泥洹, T656.72a07-13.

927 又心從心生。若此心滅餘心不生。無次第緣故。後心云何更生。又心但入無餘泥洹。斷相續時滅。非餘處滅。如經中說。以色過諸欲。以無色過色。以滅過諸作念思惟。心爲作念思惟。要以滅能過。得有餘泥洹則垢心滅。得無餘泥洹則無垢心滅。此是佛法正義, T1646.345b12-18. It is possible that the passage rests on the "corporeal" reading, in the sense that it assumes that *nirupadhiśeṣa* means the cessation of the five *skandhas*; that the cessation of the five *skandhas* includes the cessation of the sense-bases; and that on that basis, it entails the complete cessation of mental activity. Cf. the *Satyasiddhi* passages cited above n. 922 in which the equation of *sôpadhiśeṣa* with the cessation of the *skandhas* is clear; cf. also e.g. the equation of the cessation of the five *material* sense-organs and the cessation of mind in Zhu Fonian, T1543.777c14-22.

928 In addition to MPPŚ passages of this nature already noted in n. 924, see e.g. the following: a passage in Dharmarakṣa's *Yogācārabhūmi* 修行道地經, which Demiéville assigns to approx. 294 CE (Demiéville, "*Yogācārabhūmi* de Sangharakṣa" 347), seems to equate *all four* of the *śrāmaṇyaphala* with *sôpadhiśeṣa*, T606.182c06-14. Another passage in the same text, however, seems clearly to at least understand that *sôpadhiśeṣa* means that the practitioner *will not* assume any further incarnation after this present one, in conformity with the new "corporeal" model: 其修行者住於有餘泥洹之界。畢故不造不復受身, T606.223b14-15. In Dharmarakṣa's *Prajñāpāramitā,* a passage giving a list of things in which one should not "rest" or "dwell" includes an apparent instance of the old model, where *nirupadhiśeṣa* is clearly correlated with arhatship in a list of the four fruits; but this same list contains doctrinally confusing notions like "the *parinirvāṇa* of the Stream-Enterer"(須陀洹中般泥洹!) and appears in places to me to be somewhat garbled; T222.211c28-212a09.

In sum, then, we find in these Chinese texts down to about 400 C.E. reflections of the "old" model we also saw dominant in the Pāli canon; numerous reflections of the new "corporeal" model; and some anomalous passages that fit into neither model. It is possible to make a preliminary note of some suggestive patterns in these materials.[929]

Note, first, that in an earliest stratum of texts beginning perhaps with Lokakṣema or someone closely associated with him, the "old" model predominates, and especially the interesting hybrid of an overt notion of *nirupadhiśeṣanirvāṇadhātu* and the old formula of "entering into *parinirvāṇa* in the *nirvāṇadhātu* without grasping (*anupādāya nibbānadhātuyā parinibbāyati*)". On the other hand, with the sole exception of Mokṣala, all the texts from which we were able to attest the new "corporeal" model are rather late, at least in their Chinese translations: they date to the late fourth century, at the earliest. It seems, therefore, on the basis of this Chinese evidence alone, that the period witnessed by the Chinese canon was a period in which the old interpretation was still alive and the shift to the "corporeal" interpretation still underway; indeed, it seems quite possible that it was only much later than scholars have previously suspected that the "corporeal" model really took hold. Note also that, as is shown by examples of apparently "anomalous" doctrines (especially in various texts of Zhu Fonian and Kumārajīva), that it seems possible that the period in which we do begin to see plentiful evidence of the "corporeal" reading – roughly the fourth and early fifth century – was a period of quite some ferment in the interpretation of these doctrines, which would also suggest that the "corporeal" reading might have been in the process of emerging in that very epoch from this bubbling cauldron of doctrinal improvisation. In this light, indeed, it may be significant that in

[929] The evidence we have just surveyed raises a number of questions for future research, since they clearly show that the vicissitudes of the notion of the conceptual pair of *sôpadhiśeṣa*- and *nirupadhiśeṣanirvāṇa* is far more complicated in Mahāyāna materials than has hitherto been acknowledged, and secure assessment of the various ideas involved would require that we study each in the larger conceptual context of the text in which it occurs, a project which is beyond my capacity here.

Dharmarakṣa, the only early translator apart from Mokṣala in whose work we found any indication of a departure from the standard Pāli-canonical model of these concepts, the actual interpretation of them was extremely hazy,[930] almost as if new understandings were only nascent and had yet to take on any firm or fixed shape.

In my treatment of this history above, I have deliberately skirted around one major source of evidence about the terms under study here than may date to the same period: the Xuanzang version of the **Mahāvibhāṣā,* which considers these concepts quite intensively. This text was obviously translated much later than any of the texts we have considered thus far, but depending upon the actual date of its Indic original,[931] this means the *Vibhāṣā*, which contains mentions *sôpadhiśeṣanirvāṇa* in connection with other significant concepts of embodiment, may in fact be among our earliest evidence of this interpretation of the newer interpretation of *sôpadhiśeṣa-*. The **Mahāvibhāṣā* doctrine of *sôpadhiśeṣa*, however, will form an integral part of our separate discussion of the doctrines of embodiment overall found in that text, and it is for that reason that I have forborne from incorporating it in the discussion here; I will discuss below, in the section of this dissertation devoted to surveying doctrines of embodiment in that seminal text as a whole.[932]

Finally, as I will also have occasion to discuss in greater detail later in this dissertation, another important source datable to some time in the fourth century for the development of these ideas is the "Nirvāṇa Chapter" of the *Viniścayasaṃgrahaṇī* of the *Yogācārabhūmi,* in which they are

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930 See n. 928.

931 Problems with the possibly stratified nature of the **Vibhāṣā* and its implications for dating problems, in conjunction with the fact that the Xuanzang translation is so late, will be discussed in Ch. 4.4.

932 I.e. Chapter 4.4; for *sôpadhiśeṣa* and *nirupadhiśeṣa* in particular, see §4.4.6.

related to the doctrine of the "revolution of the basis" (*āśrayaparāvṛtti*). Once more, however, I will defer consideration of this chapter in the history of these ideas to the relevant part of my study.[933]

To anticipate the arguments I will develop in greater detail in those sections of this study, I will contend that it may be possible to interpret the corporeal reinterpretation of *sôpadhiśeṣa* and *nirupadhiśeṣanirvāṇadhātu* as a logical counterpart to doctrines of ideal (re-) embodiment that similarly emerge through the third and fourth centuries of the common era, and in particular, that the "Nirvāṇa Chapter" of the *Yogācārabhūmi* shows us connections between those concepts and the idea of the "revolutionary transformation of the basis" of the person (*āśrayaparāvṛtti*), which I will argue is also a doctrine understandable primarily in reference to the problematic of embodiment. I will also argue, on the basis of materials I will examine in Chapter 4.5, that the general pattern we see in the emergence of the corporeal reinterpretation of this pair of concepts in the Chinese canon mirrors the chronological pattern we see in the emergence of other important concepts in the overall discourse of embodiment, including especially the opposition between *dharmakāya* and *rūpakāya,* and even the notion of *dharmakāya* itself explicitly named as such. Thus, the bulk of the evidence seems to argue that the corporeal reinterpretation of *sa-* and *nirupadhiśeṣanirvāṇadhātu* emerges as a part of a much larger elaboration of a range of ideas about embodiment in the third and fourth centuries. In light of this large pattern and the place of the corporeal interpretation of this pair of concepts within it, it becomes apparent just how anomalous is Iti 44, as a supposedly very early passage that advances almost exactly this understanding of *sopādisesa-* and *anupādisesanibbānadhātu.*

[933] See Chapter 5.2, esp. §5.2.6.

These various arguments, however, can only be made in full when we have in hand a significant body of material that we have yet to develop, and full consideration of them must therefore be postponed to the appropriate places below. Meanwhile, we can now finally bring to a close our consideration of materials from the Pāli-canonical era bearing on the problematic of embodiment, and turn our attention to materials from the subsequent period, beginning with inscriptional evidence from the early Common Era.

CHAPTER FOUR: FIRST SIGNS OF *KĀYA* DISCOURSE IN TEXTS OF THE EARLY COMMON-ERA MAHĀYĀNA AND THE SCHOOLS: THE RISE OF THE *DHARMAKĀYA*

"Luminous beings are we, not this crude matter."
--- Master Yoda[934]

Introduction

I ended the previous chapter by arguing that the Pāli-canonical period shows us no sign of positive conceptions of special, adequate embodiments of the Buddha, and especially that there is no *dharmakāya* in the Pāli materials. A major theme of this chapter will therefore be to trace the actual origin of the conception of the *dharmakāya,* inasmuch as that is possible from our evidence, and further, to trace the origins of *buddhakāya* discourse and the notion of special Buddha-bodies *per se*. I will argue that these two tasks are, though obviously related, nonetheless separable, and that the first positive conception of a special Buddha-body that does appear in Buddhist doctrinal history is not, strictly speaking, a *buddhakāya* at all.

In effect, I will argue that the first such positively conceived special body of the Buddha is the relic of the Buddha. In order to make this argument, I will need to proceed on two fronts.

First, I will need to argue that relics are indeed a body of the Buddha, a conception of the relics that has played almost no role in the increasingly voluminous secondary literature on Buddha bodies to date. I will argue that, despite the fact that it has received so little attention in the secondary literature, the understanding of relics as bodies was in fact central to the emic discourse and practice surrounding relics through large and significant portions of Buddhist history. I will further argue that the conception of relics as bodies is a more adequate

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[934] George Lucas, prod., Ivan Kershner, dir., *The Empire Strikes Back* (20th Century Fox, 1980).

conception of relics than current interpretations for two further reasons. First, it is more accurate to the facts of the case than Gregory Schopen's characterisation of relics as "alive", which is in some respects similar and overlaps with the interpretation I advance here. Second, it allows more room for a full-blooded understanding of relics as sites in which the Buddha is *present,* an aspect of the relics which I will argue the secondary literature has been overly shy of to date.

This reinterpretation of relics as bodies of the Buddha is not only significant for its impact on our understanding of relics in and of themselves, however. Most pertinently for my purposes here, I will argue that once we understand that relics are indeed veritable Buddha *bodies* (*śarīrāṇi*), this enables us to relocate relics in their proper place as a key part of the history of ideas about the Buddha's embodiments more broadly. Scholarship to date on the history of ideas about the Buddha's bodies has perhaps been grounded in a set of assumptions that sets relics too far apart from the Buddha's other bodies, but whatever the reasons, it has certainly failed to see relics as a part of this history. I will argue that this has resulted in the neglect not just of *a* key conception of the Buddha's embodiment, but the neglect of *the very earliest* such conception. In other words, I will argue that relics are in fact the earliest positive conception of a special and adequate embodiment of the Buddha we see emerge in our record, and therefore, that they represent the very wellspring, hitherto overlooked, of the notion of "Buddha bodies" *per se*.

This part of my argument will obviously necessitate a second arm to my examination of relics, that is, the presentation of evidence that the conception of Buddha bodies is in fact early enough to be earlier than any other special notion of Buddha bodies to which our record bears witness.

At this point in our analysis we come up against a kind of "black box" in our record, that is, a gap that intervenes between the date at which it is usually understood the Pāli canon was closed (about 100 B.C.E.) and the dates of our earliest datable post-Pāli-canonical texts (the earliest Chinese translations of the second century C.E.). Obviously, just because it so happens our record is virtually silent on this long period of nearly three centuries, it does not mean that Buddhist ideas stopped developing, but almost the only evidence we have for this entire period is the state of affairs we see when the textual record picks up again in China, where we see, all in a jumble, the results of the developments of this period as they stood at that point in time. This means that for the most part, the best tools we have for picking apart the course of the development of ideas in the period enveloped by this evidential "black box" are weak inferences about the likely order in which ideas and texts could plausibly have been written, and the results of such efforts to date give me little confidence that we will ever get very far beyond guesswork.

This means, of course, that we must be careful to separate out the relatively happenstance facts pertaining to the state of our surviving record from the presumed facts of historical development as it actually took place: we cannot assume that the silence of our record on certain questions means that nothing was going on, and we cannot therefore assume that ideas necessarily arose in the order our record gives them to us. These cautions noted for the record, however, it is also true, conversely, that we cannot hope to go beyond our record and know things of which it does not speak, and that we must be careful not to let imagination fill in for us the gaps in what we wish we were able to know. This chronological "black box", therefore, presents us with the acid test of a basic principle I have tried to follow consistently throughout this study, that of only framing conclusions or even hypotheses that are warranted by the

evidence, and of recognising directly when the evidence simply is not enough to give us answers to what may be perfectly good questions.

With these weighty provisos in mind, it is my contention in this study that *insofar as our record shows,* relics are the earliest kind of special Buddha-body to arise in the history of Buddhist ideas. The main evidence to support this contention is found in a handful of key Kharoṣṭhī inscriptions, including especially the longest of these inscriptions, that of Senavarma. These inscriptions, dating as they do from around the turn of the Common Era, represent a few glimmerings of light in the otherwise enveloping dark of the "black box" period. Below I analyse the understanding of the relics in these inscriptions to show that by their light, we can clearly see that relics were already understood as veritable embodiments of the Buddha by this time, a good century or more before we see many of the related concepts in our textual record.

Thus, the argument that relics are indeed understood as bodies of the Buddha, that they are so understood as early as the turn of the Common Era, and that they therefore represent the earliest special Buddha bodies known to us, will be the main focus of discussion in the first major section of this Chapter, i.e. in Chapter 4.1.

In Chapter 4.2, I turn to the emergence of docetistic Buddhalogy, that is, of the doctrine that the Buddha does not really participate in or enter into the world, but merely puts on a show of doing so out of compassion, as a way of saving sentient beings. This doctrine is important to the history of ideas about bodies in Buddhism because it is intimately linked with the understanding that the final earthly body of the Buddha is in some sense not real, but is just a display – an understanding that is formalised in the later notion of *nairmāṇikakāya* as it enters into *trikāya* doctrine.

I turn to this part of my study at this place in its overall sequence in an attempt to observe my basic chronological structuring principle. As we will see, the *locus classicus* for this docetistic understanding of the Buddha is the *Lokânuvartanā-sūtra,* which we will study with primary reference to the translation of Lokakṣema, which dates to between 168 and 186 C.E., and therefore to the very earliest layer of the post-Pāli-canonical textual record. Further, as we will also see, this small text is truly remarkable for the number of very developed doctrines of embodiment (for its period) that it packs into its small compass. Since it appears in this light as the *de facto* point of origin, or one such point of origin among a number of texts, for at least our knowledge of a number of important ideas, it seemed appropriate to place it first among the otherwise equal earliest texts in the post-Pāli-canonical record.

And yet, respecting my basic chronological principle in this way does seem to give rise to a violation of the apparent *logical* order in which doctrines seem likely to have arisen. This is because, as I will argue in detail below, the contents of the *Lokânuvartanā-sūtra* seem clearly to show that its docetistic Buddhalogy arose, not out of a Mahāsāṃghika "Mainstream school" context, as has commonly been assumed to date, but in close tandem with a sophisticated Mahāyāna "metaphysic" and associated notions about the identification of the Buddha with the Mahāyāna "absolute" in the guise of *dharmadhātu, dharmatā* etc. However, as we will also see in this chapter, there are a good number of texts in which this understanding of the true nature of both reality at large and of buddhahood was articulated *without* the copresence of the docetistic corollary. For this reason, it seems most plausible, as I will argue in the Conclusion to this chapter, to think that that the broader metaphysical and Buddhalogical doctrines arose first, and that the corresponding docetistic ideas arose as a reaction or corollary to them, rather than imagining, contrariwise, that the metaphysic and the docetism arose together and that

the *Lokânuvartanā-sūtra* therefore represents somehow the best evidence we have of the origins of both.

Readers familiar with standard previous accounts of the development of ideas about Buddha bodies will recognise that the account of the emergence of docetistic Buddhalogy I intend to make here departs quite radically from that standard account, wherein docetistic Buddhalogy is thought to be a product of the Mahāsāṃghika school of Mainstream Buddhism or their subsect the Lokôttaravāda, which then exerted an influence upon or was accepted wholesale by the early Mahāyāna. Before setting out my analysis of the docetistic Buddhalogy of the *Lokânuvartanā-sūtra,* therefore, I will devote some attention, in §4.2.3-4.2.5, to showing that our extant evidence is simply not sufficient to support this claim, and that we have no good reasons for thinking that the doctrines we see in the *Lokânuvartanā* are derived from "Mahāsāṃghika" ideas.

In Chapter 4.3, I turn to the consideration of ideas about the Buddha's embodiments in the early Prajñāpāramitā literature, focusing for this purpose on the earliest version of a Prajñāpāramitā text available to us, Lokakṣema's translation *Aṣṭasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā-sūtra,* which, like the *Lokânuvartanā* from the same translator, dates to the end of the second century. I will show that this text contains a rich range of ideas about the Buddha's embodiments, important aspects of which have not been noticed before.

First, I will contend that it is probably significant, in light of our findings in earlier parts of this chapter that relics were already considered veritable bodies of the Buddha in a period almost certainly as early or earlier than the one to which this text bears witness, that these new concepts of embodiment are advanced in the same context as, and often in explicit conjunction

with, a polemic *against* relics as the most worthy objects of cultic practice. The implication, I believe, is that relics are precisely *not* the (most) veritable embodiments of the Buddha; and it is possible to see in this polemic against the cult of relics, and the attempt to commandeer its prestige for the cult of *prajñāpāramitā* in its stead, a likely partial motive for the elaboration of the conceit of *buddhakāya.* In other words, it seems likely that, at least in this literature, the Buddha bodies called *buddhakāya* are elaborated in part as a reaction to the preexistent conception (and prestige) of the Buddha bodies called *buddhaśarīra.*

Second, I will argue that a central thread running through the various ideas propounded by the early Prajñāpāramitā about the most veritable embodiment(s) of the Buddha is the idea that the Buddha is most veritably embodied in his gnosis, in virtue of which he is *buddha.* This conception, further, comprises an unobserved common thread binding together these Prajñāpāramitā conceptions and the apparently pluralistic conceptions of the *dharmakāya* found in (probably later) texts of the Sarvâstivāda Abhidharma, as we will see later in the chapter.

Third, I will argue that there *is,* in fact, clearly present in this and other texts at this time what I will refer to as an "emergent" Mahāyāna conception of the *dharmakāya.* By referring to this conception as "emergent" (or "prototypical" etc.), I mean that we can clearly see many of the relevant *ideas* that would eventually comprise the *dharmakāya* in these texts, even though the best reading of the evidence is that we cannot be sure these ideas were yet known by the *name* of *dharmakāya.* The most pertinent features of this emergent notion of the Mahāyāna *dharmakāya,* I will argue, is that the Buddha is identified with some form of what I will (provisionally) call the "Mahāyāna absolute", such that the Buddha is in fact one despite apparent multiplicity, does not come or go like thusness, and so on.

In advancing this third claim that an emergent and clearly Mahāyāna notion of *dharmakāya* is already present in this layer of our record, I will be arguing directly against influential claims advanced by Paul Harrison about the nature and status of the *dharmakāya* in this period, and particularly in the corpus of Lokakṣema. Harrison, as we shall see, believes that a "Mainstream" (i.e. non-Mahāyāna) notion of the *dharmakāya* pre-existed the kind of understanding I am calling Mahāyāna by a considerable period of time. This putative "Mainstream" notion of *dharmakāya,* on this understanding, conveys the idea that the Buddha is embodied in his teachings or in the special qualities that make him the Buddha (both *dharma*); and, therefore, the term *dharma-* as it enters into this notion must most paradigmatically be interpreted in the plural. Harrison argues that it is not until quite significantly later than the inception of the Mahāyāna that anything different from this pluralistic, "Mainstream" notion of the *dharmakāya* is seen, and that the recognition that this is so represents the conquest of an "imaginary discontinuity" in Buddhist conceptual history between Mainstream and Mahāyāna Buddhism in this regard. Harrison's argument has, to my knowledge, been little challenged, and many scholars have implicitly accepted it, and as a result, have begun translating *dharmakāya* in texts dating from the early Mahāyāna as "body of *dharma*(s)" etc.

One of my main contentions in the present chapter will be that Harrison is not only mistaken in so characterising a large number of passages in early Mahāyāna texts, but also that there is effectively no such thing as a "Mainstream *dharmakāya*" that could have predated those passages, from which such an understanding could have persisted into the Mahāyāna. In other words, it seems most likely to me that the *dharmakāya* is a squarely Mahāyāna concept from its very inception, and that we therefore see in Lokakṣema's and other early texts not just an emergent *Mahāyāna version of* the *dharmakāya,* but the emergence of the *dharmakāya per se.*

In a sense, the remainder of the substantive content of this chapter will be occupied with advancing two ancillary arguments to buttress this claim. First, in Chapter 4.4, I show that it is not true, as is usually claimed, that the Sarvâstivāda necessarily propounded a *dharmakāya* before the Mahāyāna, so that there is no evidence in the Sarvâstivāda corpus for a supposedly old "Mainstream" understanding of the *dharmakāya.* Second, in Chapter 4.5, I engage in a preliminary survey of evidence, primarily from the Chinese canon, for the actual date and context of the emergence of the concepts of *dharmakāya* and *rūpakāya* respectively, to show that their actual origin most probably has nothing to do with "Mainstream" Buddhism at all.

In Chapter 4.4, I examine in detail the understanding of the Buddha's embodiments in the Sarvâstivāda Abhidharma down to the **Mahāvibhāṣā.* The received understanding usually presents a supposed Sarvâstivāda Abhidharma two-body model of the *dharmakāya* in opposition to the *rūpakāya* as an important step in the development of Buddha-body doctrine. This Sarvâstivāda model is supposed to have preceded the Mahāyāna and to have been adopted by the Mahāyāna, and particularly by Prajñāpāramitā literature. Obviously, were this the case, then there would indeed have been some "Mainstream" conception of the *dharmakāya* before and alongside the Mahāyāna conception. However, I will show that it is not until the *Jñānaprasthāna* in some cases, and until the probably relatively late **Mahāvibhāṣā* itself in the majority of cases, that the Sarvâstivāda Abhidharma were interested in the problematic of the Buddha's embodiments at all. I will argue that the most consistent interpretation of this pattern is that the Sarvâstivāda jumped relatively late onto a bandwagon that had already been set in motion in other quarters, and therefore that those aspects of embodiment doctrine they do share with Mahāyāna contexts, including the concept of *dharmakāya* and indeed

preoccupation with the Buddha's embodiments *per se*, may well have been borrowed by them *from* Mahāyāna, rather than the other way around.

I will also show that the received characterisation of Sarvâstivāda doctrines of the Buddha's bodies is also inaccurate in two other key respects.

First, no secondary scholar has yet given an adequate account of the actual Sarvâstivāda doctrine of the *dharmakāya.* The Sarvâstivāda Abhidharma in fact features not one but two important definitions of the *dharmakāya,* one in terms of the eighteen "unique qualities" of a Buddha (*āveṇikadharmas*), and the other in terms of the "qualities of those beyond further training" (*aśaikṣadharmas*). Both these definitions, moreover, can be shown to centre on the notion that the Buddha is most veritably embodied in his gnosis, a common thread with Prajñāpāramitā doctrines which have been missed by scholars too preoccupied with the surface technicalia and apparent pluralism of the Sarvâstivāda doctrines.

Second, it is simply factually wrong to say that the Sarvâstivāda, at least as they are represented by their Abhidharma canon down to the seminal and immediately post-canonical **Mahāvibhāṣā,* propounded a *rūpakāya* at all. In fact, the body they opposed to the *dharmakāya* was a "body of birth" or "body born of mother and father", and I will argue that the pertinent qualities and connotations of this conception are quite different from those of the *rūpakāya.*

I will therefore argue that there are no grounds in the Sarvâstivāda literature for imagining that a "Mainstream" *dharmakāya* pre-existed the emergent Mahāyāna conceptions found, for example, in the works of Lokakṣema. In Chapter 4.5, moreover, I will survey the positive evidence for the emergence of the notion of *dharmakāya,* and its opposition to *rūpakāya.* This

examination, while preliminary, will lead to the conclusion that both concepts emerge in Mahāyāna contexts, including *rūpakāya*. To the extent that there is any pattern to the first sudden spate of attestations of the conception of *rūpakāya,* they seem in fact to be concentrated in the proto-*Avataṃsaka* literature, of all places. This evidence also, therefore, argues once more that the *dharmakāya* is a squarely Mahāyāna notion, and therefore that if Harrison is right in saying that we are the victims of "imaginary discontinuities" in our understanding of the *dharmakāya,* it may ironically enough be in the sense that we imagine there *is* any "Mainstream" understanding for the Mahāyāna concept to depart from.

An important thread that will run through this chapter is that the five "pure aggregates" (*anāsravaskandha/aśaikṣaskandha*) comprise a hidden thread that binds together a range of embodiment doctrines. I will argue, in the course of the examination of the Senavarma Inscription in §4.1.2.5, that the concrete content of this rubric lies in an unobserved use of it as an epitome of the path of practice and realisation set out in the first *vagga* of the *Dīghanikāya,* most classically in DN 2 (*Sāmaññaphala-sutta*). In this context, as I already argued in part above in Chapter 2, this rubric is already bound up with corporeal implications and concomitants of the process of realisation and liberation. We will further see, in the course of this chapter, that (as Gregory Schopen has observed before me) this same rubric is used to characterise the Buddha's relics, in which context they are said to "quicken", "animate" or "infuse" (*pari/bhū*) them. I will show, further, that this same rubric is at the heart of important characterisations of the Buddha's embodiments in the Prajñāpāramitā and Sarvâstivāda material. When we survey these various connections in which the rubric of the five "pure aggregates" is intimately bound up with various visions of ideal embodiment across centuries of doctrinal development and very different doctrinal contexts, it is clear that it is a kind of key that allows us to unlock deep affinities between sets of ideas that can appear quite different on the surface.

Finally, in the Conclusion to this Chapter, I will summarise its complex findings and attempt to weave them together into a coherent picture, one that is significantly different from the image we have previously been given of the development of ideas about embodiment in Buddhism at this date.

We turn, then, first, to the examination of relics as veritable bodies of the Buddha, and possibly as the earliest such vertiable bodies in the history of Buddhist practice and doctrine.

Chapter 4.1 Relics as an embodiment of the Buddha in the early post-Pāli-canonical period

"La description des théories abstraites n'est qu'une partie, non négligeable, de l'histoire de la bouddhologie."[935]

"The Buddhist tradition has since the death of the Buddha, or perhaps more precisely, because of the death of the Buddha, wrestled between two tendencies: to locate the Buddha in his corporeal body, especially as left behind in his relics; or to locate the 'true' Buddha in the *dharma,* his teachings. This dichotomy manifested itself in two directions: the cult of the *stūpa,* which venerated the physical remains of the Buddha; and the equation of the Buddha and his teachings . . . "[936]

The study of relics and related topics has been something of a boom industry in Buddhist Studies over the last three or four decades.[937] This welcome and fruitful development is surely one of the most salient indications of the wider sea-change in the field that has seen greater scholarly attention given to material things, "popular" Buddhism, institutions, and communities; to practice as opposed to normative doctrine; to more "religious" as opposed to "philosophical" modes of thought; and so on – in short, to put it crudely, a wide range of new topics and interests that have grown out of a common reaction against old biases that led to excessive focus on "high" Buddhism rather than "low", and "ideas" rather than "reality". This change, in turn, is obviously part of a very far-reaching shift in the whole orientation and grounding assumptions of the humanities and social sciences, and it would be a rash and blinkered observer who would not acknowledge that these changes have been enormously edifying, and have in many significant ways enriched and transformed our knowledge of the Buddhist traditions we study.

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[935] La Vallée Poussin, "Appendice" 811.

[936] Boucher, "The *Pratītyasamutpādagāthā*" 1. Later in the same paper, Boucher makes the further apposite comment, though not precisely in this connection, "The traditional distinction between *rūpakāya* and *dharmakāya* is not adequate here. Not only is the semantic domain of these terms far from consistent, but we are in fact dealing with both cultic and literary expressions of the nature of the Buddha, the relationship between which is yet to be worked out;" 20 n. 23.

[937] A good selection of this work, especially items published in English, is cited in the course of my arguments below.

And yet, despite some of the heady rhetoric that has accompanied this sea-change, there are signs that these new directions of study have simply reinstantiated and reinforced the terms of the old dichotomies and the gulfs that separate them, but with the values reversed – that they have [merely,] as John Strong has said of the work of Gregory Schopen, "done for Buddhist studies what Marx did to Hegel: to stand it on its head".[938]

One such sign, surely, is the fact that even with the lapse of so much time since the materialist revolutionaries mounted their barricades, the study of relics and the study of bodies still proceed in almost complete mutual isolation, as if these religious phenomena exist in two separate universes and never the twain shall meet. Certainly, this is the case on the side of the study of the doctrine of *kāya.* But studies of *kāya* doctrine, along with much other "high" doctrine, have fallen on hard times generally, seemingly as a regrettable side-effect of the same sea-change in interest and orientation: doctrine is not "cutting edge", it seems; it "has been done"; and interest in it may even be suspiciously reactionary. It is perhaps more surprising, however, that we also observe among students of the relic cult the same neglect of the implications of what we now know about relics for concepts and status of the Buddha's bodies, including especially *kāya* discourse.

One might have expected that scholars who were so keen to reveal the inadequacies and shortcomings of an understanding of Buddhism built entirely on "normative texts" would have

[938] Strong, review of *Bones, Stones and Buddhist Monks,* 110. I take it that Strong meant his comment as phrase, but I am obviously making ironic use of it here to indicate that that at times Schopen seems to leave the contours of old prejudices intact by simply inverting them. I should note that it is not my intention to pick unduly on Schopen here, or to denigrate his remarkable and frequently brilliant work. I have learnt and continue to learn a great deal from Schopen's publications, as will be apparent from my heavy debt to him (and scholars he has taught and inspired) throughout this section, and I admire his work very much.

leapt at the chance to consider the ways that our understanding of the content, motivations and significance of *doctrine itself* must change in light of the wealth of new information about "what real Buddhists did" "on the ground" etc. Unfortunately, however, it seems rather that the implications of new studies and their findings for "high doctrinal" Buddhism have been considered almost uniformly at the level of *exposé* and little more. We are asked to note, on almost countless occasions, that various phenomena – be they slave-holding monks, funerary services generating merit on behalf of a personality after the physical death of that person, or whatever – require us to recognise that Buddhism in the real world was more, or even the polar opposite, of "the Buddhism" we find in "the texts", so that the inadequacy of those texts as a documentary record of all Buddhist history is reinforced once more. However, the old stereotypes about the contents of high doctrine *itself* – especially the "highest" topics, like Buddhalogy and "metaphysics" – have been left to moulder and gather dust on the shelves of the discipline, perhaps the better to serve as foils for the brilliant insights afforded by new directions of study. Too rarely, it seems, have we gone beyond such *exposés* of the inadequacy of the textual record to reinterpret the doctrines themselves in a light that is more consonant with what we learn from other sources.

In what follows, I will argue that the relation between the cult of relics and "high" doctrines of *buddhakāya* is one important case in which attention to Buddhist practice and material religion can indeed precipitate a significant revision of our estimation of doctrinal history.

More concretely, I will argue first, in this section of this dissertation, that it is apparent that the relics of the Buddha were understood as *bodies* of the Buddha, in a rich, full and significant sense, from at least as early as the first century of the Common Era, and then regularly throughout the tradition. I will examine the evidence for the cult of relics and the way they

were viewed in the Pāli-canonical period, drawing on canonical texts and also some inscriptional evidence, but I will conclude that the evidence is too weak for us to be sure that the conception of relics as veritable bodies of the Buddha dates back that far. This argument will hinge in part on noting the arguments of Harry Falk that a key piece of early inscriptional evidence, the Bajaur Inscription, which has been drawn upon heavily by Gregory Schopen in his influential argument that relics are *alive* is probably not genuine. It therefore entails the argument that if relics cannot be reliably said to be bodies so early, neither can they, as Schopen contends, be said to be alive in the same period.

Schopen's characterisation of relics as alive will further comprise a primary point of engagement for my own arguments here in that I will frequently (but certainly not exclusively) argue from some of the same evidence as Schopen, but I will contend that it is a better interpretation of that evidence to say that relics are veritable bodies of the Buddha, rather than saying that they are "alive". Indeed, it seems that Schopen's contention that relics are literally "alive" also rests heavily on the Bajaur Inscription, which describes the relics as "[endowed] with breath" (*prāṇasameta*); if, following Falk, we exclude the Bajaur inscription from our consideration of what relics meant to Buddhists, the claim that they were literally alive ends up looking significantly less plausible. I will argue, therefore, that it makes consistent sense of a large body of evidence to think, rather, that relics are treated as belonging to the same category and functionally equivalent to other *embodiments* of the Buddha, and further, that in order to understand properly what that might mean, we must be prepared to let our awareness of the entire field of possibilities for the Buddha's embodiments redound upon our assumptions about the status of the Buddha's body even in what might appear to be the most intuitive case, namely, the case of his last earthly body that is (or appears to be) much like the bodies possessed by the rest of us.

I will further note that this means, given the absence of full-blooded doctrines of special ideal embodiments of the Buddha or Buddhahood in the Pāli-canonical materials, that relics are not just *an* embodiment of the Buddha, but that historically, they are *the oldest* and the first such special embodiment that was entertained by the tradition. This further implies that the very notion of special, ideal embodiments of the Buddha has its ultimate roots in cultic practice, a practice most likely old enough that the limited textual warrant that exists in the Pāli canon[939] most likely only follows after the fact. This extratextual, non-speculative origin of the notion of special Buddha bodies, I contend, has been missed completely by the field due to the excessive influence of artificial categorical distinctions between practice and ideas, and an attendant tendency to seek the origins of ideas only in other ideas, the heads of speculative monks, and the texts they authored.

In subsequent sections of this chapter, and most particularly in the section treating doctrines of bodies in the early Prajñāpāramitā literature, I will have opportunity to bear out this contention by observing the ways early discourses about the true *kāya* of the Buddha – most usually the *dharmakāya* – are in some key contexts pitched in the context of polemics against relics. Indeed, it seems to me that the connections between early developments in *buddhakāya* discourse and the relic cult are apparent enough that the *only* conceivable reason the field could have overlooked them for so long is that the interests and conceptual frameworks of scholars are still deeply shaped by the same old dichotomies of materia versus ideas, low versus high, "real" versus normative, etc., that it was an avowed purpose of the materialist turn to interrogate and overthrow. The connections between relics and *kāya* discourse as such, then, are surely uncontroversial, and indeed, in a sense they are already known, having hovered in

[939] See below for consideration of this key MPNS passage.

the wings of the literature for a very long time. Yet their full significance for the history of ideas of ideal embodiments of the Buddha overall has never yet been observed, obscured in part by blithe retroactive assumptions that later categories (in particular, *dhammakāya* and *rūpakāya*) were already present in the Pāli canon; and in part, it seems, by the exaggerated conceptual gulf between "high" or "abstract" "doctrines" revolving around flights of theological fancy like the classical *trikāya,* and "low" or "real" "practices" revolving around bits of bone and pearly grains or beads. Whatever the reasons, it seems that scholarship has never found itself moved to ask, not just where *this or that kind* of *kāya* came from, but whence arose the very idea itself of the Buddha having special *kāya* (unary or plural) at all. To anticipate, then, I will argue in later sections of this dissertation that the answer to this question is in part that *kāya,* "bodies", were advanced as a polemical alternative to *śarīra,* "bodies" (i.e. relics).

Indeed, it seems to me that the very fact that we find *kāya* talk, right at its inception, pitched against the polemical target of the relic cult, is one of the best pieces of evidence we have that relics, alike, were understood, at least by the time of the Prajñāpāramitā texts, as bodies. There are three obvious dangers in making this claim at this point in my argument, however, two logical and one expository.

Logically speaking, I first run the risk of circularity if I adduce the fact that relics were understood as bodies to make more plausible my contention that *kāya* discourse had its origin in a polemic against relics, and then turn around to adduce that polemical context as another piece of evidence that relics were indeed bodies. This problem cannot be evaded entirely, but against this danger I can only urge that I also offer below a number of other reasons to think that the tradition considered relics as bodies, even in the period preceding the Prajñāpāramitā, which are independent of this argument; and also, to suggest that, where both of these

contentions are new, they support each other in a way that is not strictly circular, but simply identifies the most coherent overall interpretation of the evidence.

Second, I also run the risk of anachronism, since strictly speaking, the fact that later authors understood relics as bodies does not necessarily mean they were understood as such in earlier periods; we have only to think of the changes undergone by the notions of *sôpadhiśeṣa* and *nirupadhiśeṣa* to know that significant shifts in the interpretation of a concept are possible. Once more, I can only point out that this is not my only argument to show that relics were indeed bodies early on, and that my other evidence does not admit the same charge of anachronism.

Finally, a related problem is that to adduce later developments in support of my contention here that relics are bodies also raises logistical difficulties of exposition, because my chronological mode of presentation means that we have yet to consider those later developments, and so I am appealing to evidence I have yet to lay before the reader. For these various reasons, I will bracket this particular argument for the remainder of this section, and merely ask the reader to bear it in mind until we return to it in the section on Prajñāpāramitā below.

Returning to the arguments I will advance in the current section, my plan of exposition is as follows. It is relatively easy, I believe, to show that relics are regarded as veritable bodies of the Buddha and function as such in the later tradition, in a wide variety of manners and contexts. It is slightly more difficult, due to the relative paucity of evidence, to establish how early this conception of relics begins, though I believe the evidence suggests strongly that we should regard it as dating back at least to the early post-Pāli-canonical period, in the reliquary

inscriptions extant in Kharoṣṭhī script. To begin my presentation, therefore, I will depart momentarily from the usual chronological order in which my exposition generally proceeds, and anachronistically present a mere selection of some of these overlaps between the category of body and relic from across various Buddhist traditions and historical periods. My purpose in so doing is to first convince my reader that relics do indeed eventually *become* a category of (Buddha-)body, albeit one not (usually) labelled by the term *kāya.*

If I can establish that much, the next question is, naturally enough: Where does this idea of relics come from? To that end, I will subsequently turn to the more rigorous task of determining when, as best we can know with the evidence available, the conception of relics as bodies began.

I will first survey the relatively slight body of materials we have from the Pāli-canonical period proper. These materials, I will argue, are more than ample to show that there was certainly a cult of relics (and a related or possibly almost coterminous cult of *stūpas*) in the Pāli-canonical era; but they do not suffice to show that relics were regarded as veritable bodies of the Buddha this early, or indeed, *how* relics were regarded, especially when we consider the shape of the evidence once the Bajaur Inscription has been eliminated by Falk's recent arguments that relevant portions are fake.

I will therefore argue that the conception of relic as body probably begins soon after the closing of the Pāli canon, and that its study therefore belongs properly in the present chapter, with the other materials relating to the Buddha's embodiments in the earliest parts of our record after the Pāli-canonical phase of Buddhist history. I will base this claim on a survey of epigraphic evidence from the early post-Pāli-canonical period, a period for which we have no firmly

datable textual evidence and for which, therefore, we are even more reliant than usual on what we can glean from inscriptions and archaeology. I will show that interesting developments can be seen in this material, particularly in the "Inscription of Senavarma", which are still likely to predate almost all post-Pāli-canonical material for which we have textual evidence (particularly material from the early Mahāyāna and the "schools"), and therefore that the evidence found here provides us with important clues to a period about which we would otherwise languish entirely in the dark. This material will allow me to show that whatever doubts we may have about the nature of relics as body in the Pāli-canonical period, there can be no doubt that this conception was current by about the turn of the Common Era at the latest, and that it therefore most likely predates any other known concept of a special body of the Buddha. It thus constitutes a very important and neglected chapter in the overall history of such concepts, and weaving it into the narrative of development of such concepts, in its full implications, will be a major task of this dissertation as a whole.

In closing this introductory section, I must make a few methodological comments.

In what follows, I have separated or marked explicitly, as much as possible, evidence directly related to relics and the possibly related, but nonetheless secondary, evidence comprised by *stūpas*. It is still too common in the discussion of relics, especially in the early period, to treat the physical evidence of "*stūpas*", regardless of what, if anything, is known of their contents, as unproblematically coterminous with relics – to think, "Where there's *stūpas,* there's relics," end of story.[940] However, it is clear that at least in certain typologies developed by the later

[940] For example, the failure to adequately observe this distinction, despite recognising it in theory, mars much of Kevin Trainor's otherwise sometimes instructive treatment of the early period in the second chapter of his *Relics, Ritual and Representation,* 32 ff. Trainor begins by saying that "the practice of venerating the physical remains of the Buddha has roots of great antiquity" and then moves immediately, without any sign of awareness that he is stepping across a possible categorical boundary, into the discussion of "*the* religious monument known as a *stūpa* or *caitya*", 32 (my emphasis); under this same

tradition, the categories of *stūpa* and *caitya* are not exactly the same, but rather clearly separated. Schopen notes this distinction after Kern (the latter writing in 1896!).[941] Bareau, too, for instance, cites the Mahāsaṃghika Vinaya to say, "If there are relics, we call it a *stūpa;* of there are no relics, we call it a *caitya*."[942] Kevin Trainor cites passages from MPNS that suggest that this distinction may be as old as the Pāli canon.[943] This distinction was already known to la Vallée Poussin,[944] and more recently has been noted by Kevin Trainor.[945] Moreover, we cannot necessarily distinguish between these two categories of *stūpa* (as reliquary monument) and *caitya* (as a broader class of memorial) on formal grounds alone. Indeed, Schopen has argued that there were originally two separate cults, one of pilgrimage to the "four sites" and one of the relics, each with their own separate textual warrant (albeit both found ultimately in the eventually canonical version of DN 16 the *Mahāparinibbāna-sutta* and cognate texts in other lineages), and that the coalescence of the cult of relics and other types of memorialising

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head of discussing the "historical antecedents" of "relic veneration", he cites as "the earliest reference in Buddhist canonical literature" ("to the *building of a stūpa*", my emphasis) the passage in MPNS that discusses the funeral rites for a *cakkavattin* – which nowhere mentions relics at all (see below)! It is only after this opening that Trainor turns to discussing various reasons for distinguishing between *stūpa* and *caitya,* 34-35. This move in the right direction is lost, on the whole, however, behind the way he continues to examine the question of the origin of the cult of *relics* through the question of *stūpas,* as if they are nonetheless coterminous. *Stūpas,* not relics, preoccupy him throughout the beginning of the chapter, pp. 32-39, and continue to obscure the question of relics *per se* subsequently.

941 Schopen, "The Phrase" 28.

942 Bareau, "La Construction" 240: 有舍利者名塔。無舍利者名枝提; T1425.498b20-21.

943 Trainor, *Relics, Ritual and Representation* 35. Trainor also adds further support to this suggestion with citations from MSV (via Edgerton).

944 "Au cours des temps, le Stûpa et le Caitya se confondent . . . [mais] le Stûpa est un reliquaire; tout monument sacré qui n'est pas un reliquaire, affectât-li la form stûpique, est un Caitya, 'mot générale qui embrasse tous les lieux et objects sacrés' . . . . A l'origine Stûpa et Caitya sont-ils la même chose? On l'a dit, parce que *caitya* se réclame, semble-t-il, d'une racie *ci,* accumuler, *citi,* accumulation, et peut signifier 'tumulus'. Il y a cependant des raisons pour penser que le Caitya primitif n'est pas en relation avec les défunts, plutôt avec les divinités et toute sorte de personaltiés surnaturelles connus sous le nom générique de Yakshas . . ." la Vallée Poussin, *L'Inde* 149-153. See also the excellent discussion of this problem in Nancy Falk, "To Gaze" 283 n. 5.

945 Though see n. 940 above. Trainor's attempt to clarify the differences between the two categories by reference to a combination of etymology and non-Buddhist textual history is also unhelpful, 35-38.

practice may be a subsequent development. Whether or not Schopen is right in this somewhat speculative argument, it does show that it is at least possible in principle that the earliest such monuments may not necessarily be related to relics, and that we cannot take for granted the later centrality of reliquary function to the design and cult of "*stūpas*" and project it back into the period that is our primary concern here. For this reason, though it does in fact seem likely to me that *stūpas* served reliquary/funerary functions from the very earliest stage of their development, I have considered the evidence of *stūpa* remains only as ancillary support for my case here, and tried as much as possible to rely primarily on more direct evidence of relics *per se*.

I should also notice that there are a some hot topics in the study of relics, and the related problem of *stūpas,* which I will bracket out of my discussion as irrelevant to my current purposes, despite the very central role they continue to play in controversies about these topics.

First, I will not ask whether or not relic worship was entirely or primarily a lay affair, at its inception or at any point in its history, or whether, on the other hand, monastics also engaged in it with gay abandon. For the record, I am convinced that the excellent work of Gregory Schopen has shown beyond the shadow of a doubt that monks and nuns, and even monks and nuns whose titles indicate they were regarded as learned, were indeed widely and actively involved in these dimensions of Buddhist religiosity, but I regard this fact as immaterial for my purposes.[946] My purposes here are only to show that *some people* in Buddhist traditions considered relics as bodies of the Buddha; whether they were laypeople or monastics does not

[946] Unless it is perhaps to show, in passing, that ideas about relics could plausibly have been present in the minds of the authors of "high" doctrinal texts and thereby have served as stimuli and foils for the ideas contained in such texts.

really matter, so long as it can be shown, as I believe it can, that this conception of relics in its turn became the catalyst and foil for ideas about *kāya* that lie at the beginnings of other ideas about special or ideal bodies of the Buddha.

Second, I will also not broach the related, vexed question of whether or not the cult of (relics and) *stūpas* was or was not one of the important factors leading to the rise of the Mahāyāna, as has been famously proposed by Hirakawa Akira,[947] and equally famously rebutted by a number of authors since. Once more, this question is immaterial for my current purposes; so long as I can show that there was indeed a notion of relics as bodies, and further that this idea interacted in a complex dialectic with other notions of *buddhakāya* in later Buddhist history, the affiliation of the notion of relic as body (if there is one) to sectarian currents in Buddhist history is a secondary question, though obviously one not without its own interest if such an affiliation could be established.

With these methodological caveats stated, then, I will now turn to my first task in this section proper, and attempt to show that relics were indeed regarded or treated as bodies of the Buddha, or as equivalent to other such bodies, in a broad variety of manners and contexts across Buddhist traditions and history.

4.1.1 Relics as bodies across Buddhist traditions and history

A survey of the secondary literature on relics and related questions reaps a large number of instances in which relics are regarded as bodies of the Buddha in various senses: either through being spoken of in the language of corporeality or having "corporeal" qualities directly ascribed to them; through functional equivalence (doing things that we know elsewhere bodies

[947] See especially Hirakawa, Akira, "The Rise of Mahāyāna Buddhism and its Relationship to the Worship of Stūpas", *Memoirs of the Research Department of the Toyo Bunko* 22 (1963), 57-106.

of the Buddha do); and through direct comparison or interchangeability with other bodies. In fact, this theme is so widespread through the record of later Buddhism and the secondary literature that treats it that it might without exaggeration be said to comprise a hitherto insufficiently recognised leitmotif running through large tracts of that material.[948] The following is merely a survey of some representative examples of this theme. Readers may note that the extent and variety of the material gives a good sense of how much remains to be done in the study of the problematic of embodiment, and the variations this theme gave rise to, especially in the later parts of the tradition; much of this material should arguably be seen in a different light once it has been recognised that relics and other forms of embodiment are properly dimensions of a single field of conceptions of embodiment, and that relics, especially, therefore, can be fruitfully understood as part of the overall dialectic of ideas that animates that field.

First, we are justified in thinking that relics are bodies because they are spoken of as such. Not only is it the case that the word *śarīra* means "body", so that *śarīrāṇi* are "bodies"; in some texts, we find additional terminology used to emphasise the fact that it is a kind of body at stake.[949] For example, in the Kashgar version of *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka* 11, Prabhūtaratna Tathāgata expresses the vow that the *stūpa* enshrining his relics will rise wherever the scripture is preached by saying, "May this *stūpa* to my body-form-relic (*ātmabhāva-vigraha-śarīra*) rise in the midst of the gathered congregation"; when this wish has been fulfilled, he further says, "And

[948] A number of scholars, of course, make comments in passing that identify one or another dimension of this theme, or otherwise intimate their awareness that relics and other bodies are closely related. But none, to my knowledge, has generalised the partial insights arrived at by each, and identified the full scale of this thematic of "relics as bodies". For hints of this idea, see e.g. Collins, "*Nirvāṇa,* Time and Narrative" 235.

[949] Such terms and passages containing them often give translators trouble, as they struggle to find some way to convey the different nuances implied (or at least, that they think they see) in the various largely redundant words used.

this, my relic-body (*śarīra-vigraha*), stands/is established within the *stūpa*".[950] Terms like *ātmabhāva* and *vigraha* are often simply other ordinary words for body,[951] so that, to exaggerate a little, we might even say that e.g. the first passage says, "this *stūpa* to my body-body-body" or "to my body, as in anatomy, as in physique"; it is possible that all the text is doing is adding redundancy to be sure that the point is not missed. Similarly, Eugene Wang has studied a series of texts and inscriptions from the Tang that consistently speak of relics as the "true body" (*zhenshen* 真身) of the Buddha.[952]

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[950] Toda, "*Saddharmapuṇḍarīkasūtra,* Kashgar Manuscript (VII-XIX)", *Bulletin of the Department of Ethics at the Tokushima University* (1977), §XI, p. 20, 229b4-b6; cited in Roth, "Physical Presence" 300. This nuance is not reflected well in recent English translations (or the versions of the text upon which they are based): "May my stūpa-shrine well up"; for the second passage, just "the stūpa of the Thus Come One . . . "; Hurvitz 184; "my funerary tower", Watson 171. Note also that *ātmabhāvavigraha* is used in a closely associated context in a much more specific meaning, to refer to the "Buddhas who are emanations" of a Buddha's body (Ch. *fenshen* 分身; see Hurvitz 185, esp. fn.).

[951] "The fact has not been recognised sufficiently clearly that [*ātmabhāva*] is a quite plain and simple synonym of śarīra, *body.* The same is in general true of Pali . . ."; Edgerton, s.v. *ātmabhāva*. For *vigraha* see Monier-Williams, s.v.

[952] Wang, "Of the True Body" 79, 80, 87, 92, 93, 97, 103 etc. The term *zhenshen* is very interesting. Obviously, given my concern here to emphasise that relics are and have always been widely understood as a kind of body by at least some sources right across the Buddhist traditions, I cannot agree with Wang's basic thesis in this article that the application of this nomenclature is indicative of a *shift* at this point in the Tang towards a *new* conception of relic as body. (The same holds for Hsueh-Man Shen's similar assertion that "the presence of the *dharmakāyagāthā* introduced the concept of the Buddha's body into the context of relic deposits", as if that concept was somehow not already part of the notion of relics much earlier; "Realizing the Buddha's *Dharma* Body" 271). Wang understands, on the basis of what I fear is a misplaced emphasis on references to miraculous display of light by relics in some earlier sources, that in the earlier period, relics were rather understood primarily as "luminous emanations". Wang says, for example, "the perception of relics as bodily remains . . . was to take root a few centuries [after Huida, 4 century]. In this sixth century, the perception of relics as luminous emanations still dominated," 85; that under Gaozong and Wu Zetian "relics took on explicit bodily associations", 86; in this era "the notion of the relic was shifting from a luminous radiance to a physical remnant of the Buddha's body", 87; etc., though he also seems to contradict himself when he says that under Wu Zetian the "*original* status [of relics] as bodily remains was *re*instated", 89 (my emphases). Though something was certainly afoot if Wang is right in pointing out that the characterisation of relics as the "true body" was new, this interpretation, that the new element was the basic fact of speaking of relics in bodily terms *per se* or perceiving relics as corporeal, is surely untenable in light of the very broad patterns of precisely such thought that we are studying here.

Wang's interpretation further rests on an understanding of the term "true body" that is based upon too narrow a selection of sources, and further, on an apparent misreading of those sources. He understands it, on the basis of only two passages from a single text (MPPŚ), as a stable technical term and "a synonym" of *dharmakāya*; 81, 379 n. 8, citing T1509.121c-122c, 278a. In fact, however, even these passages do not use the term technically, and do not really support Wang's reading. The first long passage, for example, begins by discussing the difference between the Buddha's **dharmatākāya* 法性身

and his *mātṛpitṛsāṃbhavikakāya* 父母生身, in the context of the question of how it can be that the Buddha suffered the effects of various kinds of bad *karma* (T121c26-p.122a05; Lamotte 513). The text then covers various other topics before arriving at the other portion of the passage that Wang seems to rely on for his interpretation. There, it comments on a root passage that describes the way the Buddha "made himself visible by his essential/original body to" sentient beings (以常身示 . . . 眾生; Lamotte provides *prakṛtyāmabhāva* for 常身, and translates "corps ordinaire"; the root text, which he quotes, has *sattvānām ātmabhāvaṃ prkṛtyaṃ upadarśayāmāsa*). The commentary explains that this entails a display of quite stunning miraculous powers, including the emission of light through the entire universe, "smiling with all the pores of his body" (一切毛孔皆悉微笑, 122c01), manifesting his halo, covering the entire universe with his tongue and smiling, causing six kinds of earthquake throughout the universe, and so on. We thus have a wealth of detail to flesh out for us the category of *prākṛtyātmabhāva* and know what kind of body is meant here, despite the fact that it is an unusual term, and what we see does not look like any ordinary description of a *dharmakāya*, but rather, if anything, like a prototype or alternate to *nairmāṇikakāya* or perhaps *sāṃbhogikakāya*. The commentary then goes on to say that the reason for this display is that it will prompt the faithful to realise full awakening, and the doubtful to say, "This that I see now is the true body of the Buddha" (今所見者是佛真身), and again, "This is the Buddha's true body" (是佛真身); it is clear that this is not a technical term when the text immediately paraphrases itself to say, "This truly is the Buddha's body" (此真是佛身); T1509.122c06-10, Lamotte 515-517. These utterances clearly refer to the *prākṛtyātmabhāva.* Against Wang's misreading of this long passage, then, we can say: (1) that the term appearing earlier in the passage is not exactly *dharmakāya* but rather *dharmatākāya* 法性身; (2) that occurs in any case in a different context to the term *zhenshen* several registers later; (3) that where *zhenshen* does occur, it is predicated not of *dharmakāya,* but of *prākṛtyātmabhāva,* a term far less standard and more uncertain in content; (4) that the rich detail the text gives about the nature of this body does not make it look like the *dharmakāya* in any case; (5) that *zhenshen* is not, in this context, used as a technical term, but merely in the general sense of "true body".

A broader survey of uses of the term merely reinforces this impression that it is non-technical, and that there is therefore no obstacle to its being applied sometimes to the *dharmakāya* (as in MPPŚ) and sometimes to other bodies, depending upon the polemical purpose of the text. See e.g. Dharmakṣema's *Suvarṇaprabhā* corresponding to Skt Ch. 18 (T663.354a08-13), where the term is indeed already applied to relics, in a very peculiar passage in which the Tathāgata is copresent with and worships the relics of *himself* from his former existence as a *bodhisattva*: of these relics the Buddha says "these are the relics of the *mahāsattva's* true body [*zhenshen*]" 此是大士真身舍利; nothing corresponding to this is found in Skt. or Tib.: *ānīyantām ānanda mahāpuruṣayâsthīni,* Nobel, Skt. 205; "Bring hither, Ānanda, the relics of the great being", Emmerick 86; etc. In fact, Dharmakṣema makes quite extensive use of this term, with no indication that it is necessarily the *dharmakāya* spoken of: see e.g. T374.383b06-10, 514a20-25; T387.1098a09-14; T397.3a09-14; see also T414.796c11-14, 825b23-27; T643.682c18-21, 689a26-29; opposed to the *nairmāṇikakāya* in *Satyasiddhi* T1646.240a11-13; etc. A careful study of the actual sense of the term in these various contexts would doubtless be a fruitful direction for further research, and might cast better light on what the Tang texts and inscriptions are doing with the term.

Note further that, as we will see below when we survey developments in body doctrine in the fourth century, contrary to Wang's implicit assumption, most of these texts date from a period in which *trikāya* theory was not yet orthodoxy but rather was only very freshly minted, so that it is anachronistic to understand even those terms taken up in the *trikāya* synthesis in its frame in many of these texts. In fact, it is worth noting that many of these texts date roughly from precisely the same period of intense doctrinal ferment around the topic of bodies that we will see was the context from which *trikāya* emerged. It is most likely, therefore, that *zhenshen* in these texts is yet another relatively *ad hoc* and contested term for the body, and that it is as much up for grabs as any other term in this period. Given that Wang's only authority for identifying *zhenshen* as a "synonym" of the *dharmakāya* is from precisely this period, and that in fact, it seems to drop out of currency between then and the Tang, it seems most likely that when it is taken up again in the later discourse about relics, we are dealing with a classic case of the phenomenon repeatedly seen in intellectual history whereby later thinkers take up a concept floating on the margins of earlier discourse and put it to new creative ends, and that the term *zhenshen*

Another possible instance of the use of "body" language to talk about relics may be found in Tibetan classifications that sometimes speak of relics as *byin-rten* "blessing-support". Dan Martin has pointed out that this term may be compared to a number of other Tibetan terms for sacred objects, including *sku-rten* "body-support" for images, *gsung-rten* "speech-support" for texts, and *thugs-rten* "thought-support" for *stūpas* (note that this typology is, of course, based on the triad of body, speech and mind; as Martin points out,[953] objects in all three of these categories could contain or be understood as comprising relics). Similarly, we may also thing of the well-known term *mchod-rten* "worship-receptacle" for "*stūpa*", which is on its way to becoming an English word ("chorten").[954] The relevance for us here is that *rten* is the usual Tibetan translation equivalent for Skt. verbs in */śri* and their nominal derivatives, including e.g. *niśraya* and, of course, *āśraya*; and as we will see in detail below, *āśraya* can also mean "body", at least in the context of the key Yogācāra doctrine of *āśrayaparāvṛtti*.[955] Even if the usual Tibetan

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was ideally suited to this use precisely because, being marginal, it was ill-defined enough to admit of flexible use.

With these provisos in mind, it does seem that in many of the passages above, *zhenshen* is used of a rarified, usually invisible form of the Buddha's body, and thus that Wang's intuition that the application of the term *zhenshen* to relics is somehow connected to the category of *dharmakāya* could yet lead in fruitful directions. Note, in particular, that the later category of *dharmakāyaśarīra* studied by scholars like Scherrer-Schaub, Bentor and Shen (see below, p. 482) seems, as Lewis Lancaster (just barely) shows in his "Literary Sources", to be traceable back to a layer of Tantric texts that first appear in the Chinese record in the eighth century, that is, precisely in the century that produced Wang's documents. Regrettably, however, Wang himself has not pursued this line of enquiry in the current article.

953 Martin "Pearls from Bones" n. 9.

954 Martin, "Pearls from Bones" 275. *Chorten* now appears in the OED, though the entry comprises only quotes, and otherwise simply says (perhaps erroneously!) that the term is identical to *chaitya*. OED online, s.v. *chorten*.

955 This is not only the case in the term *āśrayaparāvṛtti*. Note that in the *Yogācārabhūmi*, for example, *āśraya* translates as *lus* "body" in *āśraya-paripūrita = lus yongs su rdzogs par gyur pa; āśraya-vipariṇāma = lus yongs su 'gyur ba;* and *āśraya-pramāṇa = lus kyi tsad;* also as *sku* "body" in *āśaya-paramatā = sku dam pa.*

translations of *āśraya* in *āśrayaparāvṛtti* differ from this *rten,*[956] the broader semantic field of *rten* includes "body", and it seems plausible that it is a sense roughly like this that led to the coinage of the term *byin-rten* for relics and other terms containing *rten* for related sacred objects.

Additional, more indirect evidence that relics are Buddha bodies may be found in a number of instances where both relics and other kinds of bodies are spoken of in the same way, sometimes, indeed, in terms of very specific and developed doctrinal formulae.

For example, as we will see when we come below to treat the Pāli-canonical antecedents of the notion of the *dharmakāya,* an old canonical formula proposes that whoever sees the *dharma* (or, in other versions, the truth of *pratītyasamutpāda*) sees the Buddha himself. In other texts, however, the same formula is applied to relics. For example, in the Sanskrit version only of the *Śālistamba-sūtra,* the formula is at first more standard: "He who sees *pratītyasamutpāda* sees the *dharma,* [and] he who sees the *dharma* sees the *buddha.*"[957] However, when the text returns to this theme shortly afterwards, the formula is greatly expanded, and we read: "He who . . .[958] sees this *pratītyasamutpāda* sees the *dharma;* [and] he who . . . sees the *dharma* sees the buddha, *who is* [possessed of, characterised by] *the unsurpassed dharma-relic*."[959] A similar implication of

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[956] E.g. *gnas yongs su gyur pa, gnas gyur pa,*

[957] *yo, bhikṣavaḥ, pratītyasamutpādaṃ paśyati sa dharmaṃ paśyati, yo dharmaṃ paśyati sa buddhaṃ paśyati*; La Vallée Poussin, *Théorie des douze causes* 70. "He who sees dependent arising sees the Dharma. He who sees the Dharma sees the Buddha;" Schoening I, 230.

[958] Both *pratītyasamutpāda* and *dharma* are here qualified by the same very long string of epithets, which is not directly relevant to our discussion here.

[959] *ya imaṃ pratītayasamutpādaṃ . . . . paśyati, sa dharmaṃ paśyati; yas tv evaṃ . . . . dharmaṃ paśyati so 'nuttaradharmaśarīraṃ buddhaṃ paśyati*; La Vallée Poussin, *Théorie des douze causes* 72. "He who, having seen dependent arising as . . . who sees the Dharma also in a similar way as . . . [he] sees the Buddha, the body consisting of unsurpassable *dharma*(*s*) (*chos kyi skurd*);" Schoening I, 240-241. Note that Schoening follows Harrison's translation of *dharmakāya* despite the fact that, as he himself notes, the text is quoted as speaking of *dharmaśarīra* in Sanskrit; 241 n. 4. The term *śarīra* is missing from both Chinese translations of this passage: see T708.815b06-07, 07-08 etc.; T709.817a16-17. Both these translations are

equivalence by usurpation of place in this formula is seen in the well-known passage from the *Mahāvaṃsa* where Mahinda laments not having seen the Buddha for a long time. The king asks, "Did you not say that the Buddha has attained *nirvāṇa*?" to which Mahinda replies, "Seeing the relics is seeing the Buddha" (*dhātūsu diṭṭhesu diṭṭho hoti jino*).[960] The insertion of the relics into this formula is a clear indication that another key function that relics were able to serve, along with other bodies of the Buddha, was the function of "giving *darśan*" in the terms of broader Indian religious traditions and practice.[961]

Other instances of parallelisms in the way relics and the *dharmakāya* are spoken of can also be adduced. For example, it is often noted that the number of *stūpas* into which Aśoka legendarily redistributed the relics of the Buddha is the same as the stereotypical number of the teachings (*dharma*), i.e. 84,000.[962] This parallel is underscored even further in the *Śatapañcāśatka* of Mātṛceta, describing the *parinirvāṇa* of the Buddha: "Having transferred your body of teachings in its entirety to the virtuous and having split your physical body into tiny fragments, you attained *parinirvāṇa*."[963] Clearly, the understanding is that the *dharma* and the relics belong to

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quite early; T708, though Jan Nattier, following Tsukamoto, considers it unlikely to actually be by Zhi Qian (personal communication), nonetheless carries a preface by Dao'an; T709 is mentioned in the *Dong Jin lu* of 420.

[960] *Mahāvaṃsa* XVII 2-3, cited in Collins, "*Nirvāṇa,* Time and Narrative" 237-238; Willis, *Buddhist Reliquaries* 14; Schopen, "Burial *ad Sanctos*" 133; Schopen, "On the Buddha and His Bones" 153.

[961] On the importance of continued opportunity for *darśan* after the Buddha's *parinirvāṇa,* even as early as the MPNS, see Schopen, "Burial *ad Sanctos*" 117.

[962] See e.g. Strong, *Relics of the Buddha* 138, in part following Mus.

[963] *tathā hi satu sasṃkrāmy dharmakāyam aśeṣataḥ/ tilaśo rūpakāyaṃ ca bhittvāsi parinirvṛtaḥ.* Translation in Skilling, "Cutting Across Categories" 293, citing Shackleton Bailey, *Śatapañcāśatka* 143-145 and 178-179. Mātṛceta is thought most likely a junior contemporary of Nāgārjuna and Āryadeva and placed "between A, D, 160 and 260 or else nearly a century earlier" at the end of a lengthy discussion of the evidence by Bailey; 15.

the same category, in being (the) two forms in which the Buddha ensured the perpetuation of his being in the world after his *parinirvāṇa*.

Perhaps the single most significant example of parallel application of the same doctrinal categories in this manner is found in the inscriptional claim that relics are quickened by (*paribhāvita*) the five "pure aggregates" or a subset thereof.

To anticipate arguments and bodies of evidence I can only present in full later in this dissertation, the five "pure aggregates"[964] (aggregates "without taint" or "without outflow", *anāsravaskandha*), also known as the "aggregates of [those] beyond further training" (*aśaikṣaskandha*),[965] are held in the early Pāli tradition to comprise the person of someone perfected in the Buddhist path, in a sense as substitutes for the five ordinary (impure) aggregates (*pañcaskandha*) into which Buddhist analysis classically breaks down the supposed person of an afflicted sentient being in *saṃsāra*. I will suggest in slightly more detail below that even at this stage, we can see these aggregates as a kind of substitute embodiment for the perfected or liberated person, as is indicated by the use of the language of *skandha* and some contexts in which the rubric is used in early texts. Perhaps more significantly, however, as we will also see in detail in later sections of this chapter, the five "pure aggregates" are an important but thus-far unacknowledged common thread in early post-Pāli-canonical ideas about the ideal positive embodiments of the Buddha, featuring as such in both the

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964 These aggregates are: moral cultivation (*śīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), wisdom (*prajñā*), liberation (*vimukti*), and insight into (the) special knowledge (variously "of liberation") ([*vimukti*-]*jñānadarśana.* We will examine them in greater deal more than once below.

965 We shall see below that at least in the context of the Sarvâstivāda down to the **Mahāvibhāṣā,* it is in fact much more common to refer to these as the *aśaikṣaskandha* or "aggregates of [those who are] beyond further training". In this dissertation, for the sake of simplicity, I have nonetheless for the most part followed established convention in the secondary literature and referred to them as the "pure aggregates".

Aṣṭasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā of Lokakṣema and also the definition of *dharmakāya* found in the relatively early Sarvâstivāda setting of the **Mahāvibhāṣā.*

In light of these various senses in which the five "pure aggregates" mark, in a loose sense, a form of embodiment alternative to ordinary given embodiment even in the early tradition, and later become an important part of doctrines about ideal embodiments of the Buddha, it is surely significant that reliquary inscriptions say of the relics that they are "quickened by" ("animated by", "imbued with" etc., *paribhāvita*[966]) some or all the same "pure aggregates".[967] Attention has repeatedly been drawn to this fact by Gregory Schopen as important evidence for his claim that relics are alive. I will contend in this dissertation that in light of the part played in doctrines of other Buddha bodies, including the *dharmakāya,* by the pure aggregates, it is more accurate and less tendentious to say that the attribution of these aggregates to relics indicates that they were regarded as, or that the authors of the inscriptions wished to claim they were, veritable *bodies* of the Buddha.

Thus, as we will see in greater detail below, the claim that relics are imbued with these aggregates is found as early as the Inscription of Senavarma in the first century B.C.E.;[968] it is

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[966] In support of his contention that relics are alive, Schopen further argues that the term *paribhāvita* is otherwise, in ordinary usage, used either of living persons or of inanimate things like bodies, or of things like eggs that are capable of being enlivened, to mean that they are so infused with life, and thus that the term has a particularly strong connotation that the object described is "quickened" by the qualities to which it is applied. Schopen, "Burial *ad Sanctos*" 128; at greater length, "On the Buddha and his Bones" 154-156. In order to recall this context and this argument of Schopen's, I have tended in this dissertation to translate *paribhāvita,* a term which occurs repeatedly in body discourse in contexts wider than just discussion of relics, as "quickened by". However, this translation practice has sometimes led me into awkwardness, and I suspect that Schopen may possibly have picked out and overemphasised only one part of a word which in fact has a more complex overall semantic range.

[967] As we will see in more detail below, in some of the early inscriptional evidence we only get parts of this set.

[968] See Salomon, "Inscription of Senavarma" l. 7a-b, p. 265, 270; Schopen, "Burial *ad Sanctos*" 126; "Relics" 261 etc. We will examine this inscription in detail below, §4.1.2.4.

also found in the Kopśakasa Reliquary Inscription of 26 C.E.;[969] Schopen also provides references to textual evidence of the same notion, predicated of relics, quite early on in the *Buddhacarita* (a partial parallel only), in the *Aṣṭa,* and (probably a little later, by Schopen's reckoning) in the *Milindapañha;*[970] elsewhere he has also noted a (grudging) concession that this is true of relics in the *Maitreyasiṃhanāda*.[971]

The ramifications of the ascription of the five aggregates to relics are too complex for us to enter into fully here, and I defer parts of the discussion to the detailed analysis of early Common Era reliquary inscriptions, and especially the Senavarma Inscription, below (§4.1.2.5); and also until I have been able to lay out the relevant evidence in Sarvâstivāda and early Mahāyāna conceptions of the Buddha's embodiments. For the present, I merely wish to point out that this is yet another respect in which relics and other Buddha-bodies belong to the same broad category, and that it is therefore one more piece of evidence that relics are indeed treated as veritable bodies of the Buddha.

Further evidence that relics are bodies of the Buddha can be found in another set of evidence Schopen uses to make his claim that relics are alive, and that the Buddha is said to be present in them or they are treated as if he is. Schopen notes that the destruction of relics was in various senses equal to killing or murder of the living person. He shows, for example, that inscriptions from as early as the first century B.C.E. claim that the destruction of a *stūpa* is equivalent to one of the five most terrible sins, the others of which are almost all to do with "seriously harming

[969] See n. 1134 for reference; this inscription is mentioned in this connection by Schopen in "On the Buddha and his Bones" 154.

[970] Schopen, "Burial *ad Sanctos*" 127-128; the same sources also at "On the Buddha and his Bones" 154-156, "The Bones of a Buddha" 78-79.

[971] Schopen, "The Bones of a Buddha" 77-78. Schopen suggests that this text probably dates to the first or second centuries, i.e. to the Kuṣān; 79-80.

living persons of rank".[972] Other instances of this idea can be found e.g. in the late *Cūlavaṃsa,* where the destruction of a *stūpa* by Tamil invaders is accompanied by the destruction of relics that were the "veritable life of them" (*teṣaṃ jīvitasaṃnibhe . . . dhātū sārīrike*), or in the MSV, where nuns lament the destruction of a monk's *stūpa* by crying, "Our brother is from today truly dead!" (*bdag cag gi ming po deng gdod shi ba lta zhes . . .*).[973]

Schopen is also wont to rely for the demonstration of this claim, first, on the Bajaur Inscription, which says that they have "[life-]breath". If it were genuine, this *sui generis* inscription would constitute not only one of the most striking pieces of evidence in support of Schopen's claim, but also the earliest concrete evidence that relics are thought to be alive, and therefore a very early piece of evidence that relics are understood as veritable bodies of the Buddha. However, Harry Falk has recently argued convincingly that the portions of the Bajaur Inscription that make this statement are most likely inauthentic, and it is notable, I will argue in more detail below,[974] wherever Schopen cites this quite spectacular notion to show that relics were alive, he only ever seems to adduce this single reliquary (with two actual instances of the relevant epithet) in evidence;[975] despite the fact it is attested so early, this locution is apparently otherwise completely unknown. For the present, therefore, I will bracket this inscription and the claim that relics "have [life-]breath" that is built on it, since I think that the argument that

[972] Schopen, "Burial *ad Sanctos*" 128-130.

[973] Schopen, "Relics" 260, citing *Cūlavaṃsa* from Geiger vol. I, 133, and MSV from his own "The Suppression of Nuns and the Ritual Murder of Their Special Dead in Two Buddhist Monastic Texts", *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 24 (1996). Trainor also cites the same *Cūlavaṃsa* passage, 99 n. 8.

[974] See p. 512.

[975] Schopen, "Burial *ad Sanctos*" 126, "Relic" 259-260, etc.

relics are veritable bodies of the Buddha can be made amply without it, and its inclusion renders the case too tendentious.[976]

In a related idea, the Buddha is also spoken of in various ways as "present" in the relics. This notion has been widely propounded by a number of secondary scholars who work on relics, as well as on related objects like images and *stūpas*.[977] At the same time, however, the application of the notion of presence to relics and like objects causes some secondary scholars understandable anxieties in light of various Buddhist doctrines. The whole notion of "presence" seems to have overtones of a whole range of unacceptable metaphysical and ontological entailments.[978] To be fair to scholars troubled by these problems, we must note that similar questions also troubled some parts of the tradition, in response to which, for example, the solution was elaborated that relics have their vitality not because the Buddha is directly

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[976] It must also be noted that Schopen himself has also cited evidence to show that this view was certainly not universal and uncontested, as the *Maitreyasiṃhanāda* says outright, "Why do the relics of a Tathāgata, which are without life, receive worship?" *rgyu gang gis na de bzhin gshegs pa'i sku gdung sems pa mi mnga' ba rnams kyis mchod pa brnyes par 'gyur snyam;* Schopen, "Bones of a Buddha" 77-78. Schopen discusses the difficulty interpreting the key phrase *sems pa mi mnga' ba,* but suggests that a likely reading is to see it as a direct denial of the notion that relics are **prāṇasameta* as is claimed by the Bajaur inscription. If Falk is right and the Bajaur Inscription is fake, however, we have no evidence that such a locution was ever current in Buddhism before the *Maitreyasiṃhanāda,* and Schopen's reading of the latter text is thus placed in difficulties.

[977] A useful sampling of such language is provided by Kinnard, "Field of the Buddha's Presence" 117-118. See also e.g. Trainor, "Introduction" 14, 16; Falk, "To Gaze" 284; Obeyesekere, "Buddhist Pantheon". "Once freed from the rationalizing gloss of earlier apologetic accounts, the Buddhist treatment of icons and relics indicates that such objects were treated as animate entities capable of intentional acts . . . . The ethnographic (? *sic*) record suggests that icons and relics were not regarded as representations of the divine or the ultimate, any more than a person's body is regarded as a representation of that person." Sharf, "Allure" 179.

[978] See also Kinnard, " Field of the Buddha's Presence", infra; Steven Collins, "*Nirvāṇa,* Time and Narrative" 235 n. 45; Willis, *Buddhist Reliquaries* 17. This problem is in some instances confused with the slightly different problem raised by the notion relics being "alive": if the Buddha "lives" in the relics, it seems to be felt that this negates or makes a nonsense of his (*pari-*)*nirvāṇa.* See, for example, the somewhat confused discussion of these problems in Obeyesekere's early "Buddhist pantheon", esp. 7-9, where he seems to confound the arguably separable problems of "being alive or dead" and "existing and non-existing" (the latter understood in terms of the questions that tend not to edification, standard *catuṣkoṭi* unanswerability etc.).

present in them, but rather because they were "empowered" in this way by a vow (*adhiṭṭhāna*) undertaken by the Buddha in his final lifetime.[979]

It seems to me, however, that on reflection, there is no more problem with the notion of "presence" of the Buddha as applied to relics, or to other bodies like the *sāṃbhogikakāya* (which certainly makes the Buddha "present" in the assemblies of rejoicing *bodhisattvas*), than there is with the idea that he was "present" in his physical fleshly body during his final "historical" lifetime. In that case, too, he refused such categories (as in the famous passage where he denied he was man, *deva, gandharva* etc., in order to say that he was simply [a] *buddha*), and in that case, too, we would surely have equal philosophical scruples about applying the notion of "presence" to the Buddha in that form if we stopped to think about it. It is, perhaps, only because the given, fleshly body is such a natural-seeming category that we do not stop to think about it, as we do in the case of little pearly beads in a box. Indeed, we might argue that the Buddha's special bodies, that is, types of body he does not share with ordinary beings – including relics – are a *less* conceptually offensive category, more consonant with the extraordinary nature of his being in general than the "coarse body, grain-fed, born of father and mother" etc. with which he was born, and indeed, it is even more arguable that the tradition certainly felt and acted upon this intuition very broadly. For these reasons, despite the admitted problems that might be entailed by certain ontological/metaphysical implications of the word, I will proceed use as my English term for discussing this dimension of ideas the phrase "presence of the Buddha" etc.

Thus, for example, Schopen has very carefully studied a formula found in the inscriptions at Nāgārjunikoṇḍa, and argued at length that we should interpret it as reading, "Homage to the

[979] See Willis, *Buddhist Reliquaries* 17, citing *Mahāvaṃsa* 17: 46-52.

Blessed One, he who is honored by the king of the gods! At the Great Shrine of the Perfectly Enlightened One who is enclosed within this most excellent relic . . ."[980] Schopen himself argues on the basis of this reading:

> "[The] redactor *did not* think of the *dhātu* or 'relic' as a piece or a part of the Buddha. He seems in fact, to have thought of it as something that contained or enclosed the Buddha himself, something in which the Buddha was wholly present. But if the Buddha was present in the relic, the relic could not represent – as has sometimes been argued – a token or reminder of the past and 'dead' Buddha: for the Buddha to be present, he would have to have been thought of as alive."[981]

It may be true that the Buddha would "have to have been thought of as alive" to have been understood as present in the relic, at least insofar as we imagine a Buddha as a being who is "alive" in the first place – though there, precisely, is the rub, since surely, in a Buddhist context, "to be alive" means "to be in *saṃsāra*", and is therefore a category to which the Buddha does not[982] simplistically belong. Nonetheless, if Schopen shows that the Buddha was "present" in the relic, then, whatever we might think about "being alive", it surely shows equally that the relic can be understood as his body: something in the physical world in which a being is present is, by definition, the body of that being.

The simplest way in which we can show that the Buddha is present in the relics, and thus that relics are bodies for the Buddha, is by the observation of overt assertions that the Buddha and the relic are the same thing, such that relics veritably "body forth" the Buddha in the world. For example, Collins cites a passage found in several texts stating that, "Where the relics endure, the Buddhas endure" (*dhātūsu hi ṭhitās Buddhā ṭhitā va honti*).[983] In a related tradition,

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[980] *namaḥ bhagavate devarājasatkṛtāya . . . saṃma-saṃbudhasa dhātuvaraparigahitasa mahācetiye*; "On the Buddha and His Bones", 148; translation at 158-159. Schopen also considers the possibility that *dhātuvaraparigahita*(*sa*) should be translated "who is enclosed in the relic chamber".

[981] "On the Buddha and His Bones" 158.

[982] Or "does not not", or "neither does and does not, nor does not and does not not", etc.

[983] Collins, "*Nirvāṇa,* Time and Narrative" 238, citing a range of post-canonical texts.

Trainor mentions that Theravādin sources held that the necessary condition for the arising of the next Buddha in the world is the disappearance not just of the teachings, but also of the relics.[984] The fourth-century *Dīpavaṃsa* similarly treats relics and the Buddha as identical when it describes the journey of Sumana to Paṭaliputta to obtain a relic in order that monks in Sri Lanka can "see the Buddha", he is told to ask Aśoka for the "best of relics", and in making his plea, he says that his king is going to "build a *stūpa* for the Teacher".[985] The much later *Chakesadhātuvaṃsa* repeats the same trope, saying that part of the ritual enshrinement of a relic is the utterance of the prayer, "May the Blessed One dwell at this place for five thousand years . . . " (*bhante bhagavā imasmiṃ ṭhāna . . . pañcavassasahassapamāṇaṃ tiṭṭhā*).[986]

In addition, we can note that places containing relics and related objects were or are treated as if the Buddha was present there in various ways. As far back as the MPNS (at least the Sanskrit version thereof), as Schopen points out, the promise that those who die at the four sites of pilgrimage will go to heaven is expressed by saying, "Those who . . . will with devout minds die *in my presence*" (*mamântike kālaṃ kariṣyanti*) . . . all will go to heaven."[987] We have of course already observed that *caitya* and *stūpa* cults are in some respects theoretically separable, but it is also the case that in many respects pilgrimage to reliquary *stūpas* and to memorial *caityas* was treated as functionally identical in later parts of the tradition; for example, Schopen has shown convincingly that burial *ad sanctos,* which was perhaps in part warranted (or rationalised *post hoc*) by this text, was conducted from early times around reliquary *stūpas* as well as memorial

[984] Trainor, "Introduction" 14.

[985] Schopen, "On the Buddha and His Bones" 153.

[986] Schopen, "On the Buddha and His Bones" 153.

[987] See Schopen, "*Stūpa* and *Tīrtha*" 364. Also cited in "Burial *ad Sanctos*" 116.

caityas.[988] We can thus assume that in some cases this notion of the Buddha's presence would certainly have applied to relics and their *stūpas* also.

In like vein, Schopen traces the rise of a feature of monastic architecture called the "fragrant chamber" (*gandhakūṭī*), from around the fifth century C.E., which was treated as the residence of the Buddha within the monastery; it is notable that one of the key features of such a chamber was the presence of an image of the Buddha. Though I do not know of any direct assertion that such images necessarily contained relics, it is common knowledge images often had and have a kind of reliquary function and were and are "quickened" by the insertion of a relic. Juliane Schober has also shown that in monasteries in modern Burma, the "fragrant chamber", which is still a feature of monastic architecture, is the site of an "Ānanda practice" in which the image of the Buddha is served with all the care lavished on the living Buddha by Ānanda himself.[989]

Thus, relics can be considered as bodies of the Buddha in that they are understood to be places or objects in which the Buddha is present. We now turn to another set of evidence that relics are bodies of the Buddha, found in functional equivalences between relics and other bodies.

In addition to what is said directly about them, relics are also shown to be bodies of the Buddha by the many functional equivalences that are posited between them and other such bodies. Though of course it must be recognised that not all voices in the tradition endorsed these functional equivalences, it does seem possible to say that we can almost guarantee that if there

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[988] Schopen, "Burial *ad Sanctos*" 118-119, 125-126 etc. The early example Schopen adduces is that of the Dharmarājika *stūpa* at Taxila, where he sees burial *ad sanctos* as early as the first century BCE.

[989] Frustratingly, I can find no mention in her article of whether or not the images in these chambers contain relics or not, or whether relics are otherwise ensconced there.

is a function of a body of the Buddha, someone somewhere will have ascribed that function to relics, too, so that the overall field of discourse about bodies is characterised by an almost complete potential functional interchangeability between relics and other bodies.

One of the most important functional equivalences between relics and other bodies is that relics are also often said to be identical to the Buddha as objects of worship and fields of merit, that is, the act of worshipping them (or the *stūpas* containing them, which in some cases clearly become virtually interchangeable with the relics themselves) is clearly stated to be every bit as meritorious as the worship of a living Buddha. This same equivalence to the living Buddha is also claimed for other bodies, as e.g. we will see of the *dharmakāya* (defined as the teachings) in the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā.* The equivalence of relics and the Buddha in this regard can be vividly illustrated by an extended example from the *Mahāvastu.*[990]

The text begins by stating outright that the merit earned by doing honour (*satkāra*) to the Tathāgata "with flowers, garlands, perfumes, flags and banners, music, and ointments" is immeasurable because his purity is perfect. Nevertheless, "it is all the same if one shall worship (*pūjeyā . . .*) the Tathāgata when he is still living (*tiṣṭhantaṃ*) and shall revere him, esteem him and honour him (*satkareyā gurukareyā māneya*) with flowers etc. . . . or if he shall honour him when he has utterly passed away by laying over him a wreath of mustard flowers (*parinirvṛtasya sarṣapaphalamālamapidhātuṃ satkareyā ityetaṃ samasamaṃ*)."[991]

The Bhagavan then utters verses, stating that one who, "having turned his thoughts to enlightenment for the sake of all living things, reverentially salutes (*abhidpradakṣinaṃ karoti*)

[990] The whole passage runs from Jones II, 328-354.

[991] Jones II, 328-329.

the *stūpa* of the Saviour of the world"[992] will achieve a quite a stunning jumble of mundane and supramundane benefits, which include range of salubrious moral states that help along the road to enlightenment; the honour of Nāgas, Yakṣas and Rakṣasas; rebirth in the presence of the next Buddha; the attainment of physical beauty and "marks of excellence"; the perception of the insubstantiality and emptiness of dharmas (*na so muhyati dharmeṣu nairātmyaṃ dṛṣṭvā śūnyatāṃ*); being well versed in the *dharma*; good rebirths in various prosperous families and states of affluence; kingship; rebirth in heavens; lordship over *devas*; avoidance of blindness; strength, bodily well-being, and health; avoidance of deaths by misfortune and regular attainment of the full term of life; renown; cleanliness; rebirth among the Trāyatriṃśa *devas* with various wonderful appurtenances; freedom from the three poisons; memory of former lives; aversion to sensual pleasures; immunity from grief; adornment with the thirty-two marks; and, indeed "awaken[ing] to the supreme enlightenment".[993] Eventually, indeed, the description of the remarkable blessed being that results from the worship of the *stūpa* blends into the description of a *bodhisattva,* that is, into a description of a being advancing very far along the path to full Buddhahood himself.[994]

In essence, the lesson the text works at such great length to drive home is indeed, as Foucher says, to "demonstrate the equivalence of . . . the cult [of the *stūpa,* and, we may add, the relic

[992] Jones II, 329; *bodhāya cittaṃ nāmetvā hitāya sarvaprāṇināṃ/ yas stūpaṃ lokanāthasya karoti abhipradakṣiṇaṃ.* I have throughout the following replaced *stūpa* for Jones's "tope".

[993] Jones II, 329-334. Similar hyperbolic benefits accrue to one who burns a grain of incense finer than a mustard seed, or who puts a mere flag on a "shrine of the Buddha" (*cetiya*), 338-341. So too one who "plays on an instrument of music at the Conqueror's shrine", 345; one who cleans a *stūpa,* 345-346, 347; offering one drop of oil or a hundredth part thereof at a *stūpa,* 346-347; anointing it in perfume, 348; etc.

[994] Jones II, 334-335.

itself] to that of the Buddha in person."[995] The equivalence here is, specifically, equivalence as a recipient of offerings and an object of *pūjā,* that is, as a "field of merit". It is not only this functional equivalence that establishes that the relics and the *stūpa* are equated with the person and even the body of the Buddha, however.

In places, the verses further directly identify the place of the relics in this very beneficial cult of the *stūpa*, speaking of the merit-making activity in terms of "ma[king] a booth of festoons over the relics of the Saviour of the world" (*mālāvihāraṃ kṛtvāna lokanāthasya dhātuṣu*). Repeatedly, the verses also interlace the description of the meritorious activity that leads as "having worshiped a *stūpa*" as reliquary with alternate descriptions in terms of having "worshipped the best of bipeds" (*pūjetvā dvipadottamaṃ*), "rendered worship to a Tathāgata" (*pūjāṃ kṛtvā tathāgate*), or "worshipped the Guide" (*pūjetva nāyakaṃ*) etc.[996] – in other words, it speaks of the worship of the *stūpa* as interchangeable and identical with worship of the living Buddha.

In one part of this long passage, where the Tathāgata tells of similarly meritorious deeds he himself performed in the past, and the act of giving a sunshade to the Buddha "lest the sun should scorch the body of the Buddha" (*mā buddhakāyaṃ tape rasmirājā*) subtly shades into a parallel act of "plac[ing] a sunshade over the *shrines of* the Conquerors" (*daditva cchatraṃ jinacetiyehi*), another telling suggestion of the equivalence here drawn, not just between relics/shrines and the Tathāgata himself, but more exactly his *body.*[997]

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[995] *Gandhâra,* I, 62, cited in la Vallée Poussin, *L'Inde* 143-144. I believe that this is the passage Foucher must have been thinking of when he says "a long passage in the *Mahāvastu*", but either he or la Vallée Poussin does not give an exact reference.

[996] These examples at Jones II, 332-333.

[997] Jones II, 343-344.

In another section, describing once more someone who "reverently salutes a *stūpa* of the Buddha" (*yo añjalīye vandati buddhastūpaṃ*), the text states that such a person

> " . . . sees the Conqueror in his own home, eating his food and speaking of the *dharma*. Full of faith he reveres the Conqueror. Taking a bowl he approaches the Guide.
>
> "The Conqueror, knowing his thoughts and his noble conduct, accepts the bowl from him. In the *deva*-world glory shall be his, and in the world of men he shall be distinguished . . .
>
> "Knowing that the bowl has been accepted by the Sugata, he is thrilled and filled with joy."[998]

This remarkable passage culminates with the pious *stūpa*-worshipper envisaged arousing *bodhicitta* and vowing to save all beings, and then receiving the prophecy from the Buddha: "Thou will become a Buddha, a Saviour of the world."[999] It could not be plainer that the text is at pains to show that worship of relics and the *stūpas* containing them operates in every sense in the exact same way as does worship of a living Buddha, and that every benefit that could accrue from the latter worship also attaches to the former. The relic and/or its *stūpa* therefore *is* the Buddha, and the remarkable passage about the sunshades even hints that they are equivalent precisely in that they are equally his bodies.

This equivalence of the relics and the living Tathāgata as recipients of offerings and objects of worship is often found elsewhere also. As here, full awakening is said to have accrued to relic and *stūpa* worshippers in the "rhapsody of relics" in the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka,* as Skilling notes;[1000] and the celebrated offering by immolation of an arm on the part of the *bodhisattva* Sarvasattvapriyadarśana is directed towards the relics of the Tathāgata (*tathāgatadhātūnāṃ*

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[998] Jones II, 353.

[999] Jones II, 353.

[1000] Skilling, "Cutting Across Categories" 284; Hurvitz 38.

pūjaṃ).[1001] The *Adbhutaparyāya* speaks of the establishment of a *stūpa* containing a relic as the establishment of a *stūpa* "for the Tathāgata", directly.[1002] Further, in what is in fact merely another passing episode in an epic series of "merit wars" in which texts advocating various "fields of merit" over others continually ratchet up the stakes in exaggerating the vast amounts of merit that accrue to the cult of their favoured object, the text also claims that the merit of establishing even the tiniest of *stūpas* would vastly outweigh offerings enough to fill whole continents offered to "the stream-enterers, the non-returners, Arhats, Pratyekabuddhas". In explaining the reason for this, the text simply explains the vast, immeasurable virtues of the Tathāgata himself, reinforcing the point that to establish a *stūpa* with a relic is simply identical with directly worshipping the Tathāgata.[1003] Similarly, the worship of relics and *stūpas,* equally with that of living Buddhas is presented as part of the *bodhisattva* path in the *Bodhisattvabhūmi*.[1004] Schopen cites passages from the *Mūlasarvâstivāda-vinaya* in which the worship of the relics of the former Buddha Kāśyapa is represented as exactly as meritorious as worship of the living Buddha: "He who would worship a living (Buddha), and he who would worship one who has entered final *nirvāṇa,*[1005] having made their minds equally devout – between them there is no distinction of merit."[1006]

[1001] Hurvitz 297; see also Skilling, "Cutting Across Categories" 287.

[1002] This formula is repeated a number of times in the text; see Bentor, "The Redactions" §3-8, p. 34-38, translation p. 41-44.

[1003] Bentor, "The Redactions" §9, 38, 44-45. Bentor points out that this passage is also found in the *Kūṭāgāra-sūtra* and the *Mahāraṇa-sūtra,* 21; also "Indian Origins" 249.

[1004] Skilling, "Cutting Across Categories" 286 n. 85.

[1005] It is clear from the narrative context that this is done by rendering worship to the relics of such a Buddha – indeed, it is particularly clear in this case, since there is no longer a *stūpa* present, though I see reasons to be very cautious of Schopen's suggestion that this must be historical and "reflect a period prior to the development of the monumental *stūpa* when relics were simply buried in the ground at specific places"; "Burial *ad Sanctos*" 131.

[1006] *tiṣṭhantaṃ pūjayed yaś ca yaś cāpi parinirvṛtaṃ/ samaṃ cittaṃ prasādyeha nāsti puṇyaviśeṣatā;* Schopen, "Burial *ad Sanctos*" 132.

Still another functional equivalence often seen between relics and other bodies of the Buddha – or, more accurately, between the Buddha as presenced in his relics and the Buddha in other bodies – is the fact that relics can perform miracles. For example, the *Mahāvaṃsa* reports that relics performed the "double miracle" of emitting flames and water simultaneously.[1007] Skilling cites a number of further instances, from Sri Lanka and Siam to China and Japan, and note that "the miracles were potent agents of conversion".[1008]

A further functional equivalence between relics and the Buddha, which has been used by Schopen to argue that relics are alive but which can be equally well interpreted as meaning that relics are bodies, is that relics and their *stūpas* can legally hold property, and this property is moreover inalienable and by a kind of "holy contagion" itself becomes a *caitya* or sacred object.[1009] In other words, for example, a scarf given to a relic or *stūpa* becomes by that act a "relic of association", precisely as it would had it been used by the living Buddha himself.

Relics are not only equivalent to bodies in the terms applied to them and their function. In some cases, relics and various kinds of bodies actually transform into one another, or relics are explicitly treated as belonging to another category of body. In some marvel tales and miracles, for example, we see a very special kind of equivalence between relics and other forms of Buddha-body, which we might most accurately call "mutual commutability". For example, a Theravāda tradition tells of a second *parinirvāṇa,* that of the relics themselves. This tradition relates that at this time, all the various relics of the Buddha will reassemble themselves, by

[1007] Cited in Falk, "To Gaze" 284.

[1008] Skilling, "Cutting Across Categories" 279.

[1009] See e.g. Schopen, "Burial *ad Sanctos*" 129-130.

means of *ṛddhi/iddhi,* into a giant Buddha-body, which will then utter a final sermon.[1010] Of course, the exertion of powers, and the preaching of sermons, and entering into *parinirvāṇa* all constitute interesting functional identities between relics and the living Buddha; the capacity to enter into *parinirvāṇa,* particularly, further suggests that the relics must be alive, since *parinirvāṇa* is here surely understood after the model of bodily death. Of more interest here, however, is the fact that the relics can reconstitute themselves into a(nother) true body of the Buddha, almost as if to demonstrate the underlying identity that has subtended these various "bodies" all along. Similarly, John Strong reports that according to the *Mahāvaṃsa,* when the relics are enshrined in the great shrine at Anurādhapura, "the casket containing them opens of itself and the relics 'come alive'; they rise up into the air and take on the form of the Buddha together with all the bodily signs of the Great Man (*mahāpuruṣa*), and perform various miracles. They recapture, in other words, the living presence of the Enlightened One." The relics then take on the form of the Buddha on his deathbed, "thus [to] abide undisturbed forever".[1011]

Another kind of "mutual commutability" between relics and other bodies seems to play itself out in the long and complex history of interaction between relics, on the one hand, and the scriptures as a body (or bodies) of the Buddha, on the other. We will examine part of one chapter of this story in more detail in a later section of this dissertation, when we examine the enmeshment of key early talk about the *dharmakāya* in polemics against relics or, at the very least, in contests of relative worth or comparisons with relics.[1012] Here, however, we can briefly mention the later tradition, which we will otherwise have little opportunity to treat, of

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[1010] See e.g. the *Traibhūmi* of King Ruang, cited in Skilling, "Cutting Across Categories" 282. This tradition is also mentioned in Obeyesekere, "Buddhist Pantheon" 9.

[1011] Strong, "Buddhist Relics", 35-36, citing *Mahāvaṃsa* 255, Geiger's Eng. trans., 217; see also Collins, "*Nirvāṇa,* Time and Narrative" 238.

[1012] See Chapter 4.3, infra, and especially §4.3.3.

"dharma relics"[1013] (*dharmaśarīra*) in the special and, later in the tradition, most typical sense whereby the *dharma* enshrined is a verse epitomising the *pratītyasamutpāda*. This is a practice that has been very effectively studied by Dan Boucher.[1014]

The murky origins of this eventually tight and consistent association between *pratītyasamutpāda* and relics can be traced back perhaps to the "Kurram Casket Inscription", which Konow dates to the year 148 C.E. Here, the connection is merely one of juxtaposition, since the inscription simply records the establishment of the relic, and then gives an epitome of the doctrine of *pratītyasamutpāda;*[1015] nonetheless, it seems to indicate that there was a link in practice between the enshrinement of relics and the rehearsal of this epitome of the teachings, and thus that there was a felt sense in which the relic perhaps somehow instantiated the *dharma*. Boucher further cites a number of other inscriptions in which we see the same tendency.[1016] The point for our current purposes is that, as we have just had occasion to note, *pratītyasamutpāda* was, like the teaching that points to it, in some contexts identified with the Buddha himself (the *Śālistamba-sūtra* etc.). To anticipate a little arguments that properly belong later in this dissertation, *pratītyasamutpāda* can be understood as *dharmatā,* "the way things (really) are", where the teaching describes that reality; both, however, answer equally well to, and have been understood equally by the tradition under, the name of *dharmakāya*. To

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[1013] John Strong, with his customary perspicacity, has noted in passing the connection between *dharmaśarīra* and *dharmakāya*. Speaking of the practice researched by Boucher and discussed here, he says, "Through transubstantiation, the eucharistic bread and wine 'are' the body of Christ and so are more akin to primary bodily relics in both their function and their conception. And likewise the *dharma-śarīra* 'are' the body of the Buddha, his *dharmakāya,* and this through a process that might be called 'textualisation'." Strong, "Buddhist Relics", 38.

[1014] Boucher, "The *Pratītyasamutpādagāthā*".

[1015] Konow, *Corpus* 152-155. Konow has also studied this inscription at greater length in his article "Remarks".

[1016] Boucher, "The *Pratītyasamutpādagāthā*" 4.

enshrine an epitome of the *pratītyasamutpāda,* therefore, is to enshrine *dharmatā,* and epitome of the *dharma* as teaching, and therefore, in a double sense, the *dharmakāya* itself. When, as in the Kurram Casket Inscription, the enshrinement of a relic is accompanied by the rehearsal of this epitome, a functional equivalence between the two is already implicit, and as Boucher shows so amply, the logic was eventually to be followed to its natural conclusion, where the epitome, and indeed, in a sense, the *fact of* conditioned co-arising to which it refers, was directly installed in *stūpas* as a full-fledged relic itself. This practice became extremely widespread in the period from the sixth century onwards,[1017] and is eloquent testimony to the functional commensurability and commutability of relics and the most rarified of the Buddha's bodies.

Indeed, a further twist on this dialectic of mutual commutability is found in a number of widely scattered instances even later in the tradition, whereby the one kind of body is itself subsumed into the categories of the other kind – that is, whereby *dharmakāya* in one sense or another itself becomes a *śarīra,* and traditions speak of *dharmakāyaśarīra.* This notion can be clearly dated to at least the eighth century C.E. Lewis Lancaster has studied a fourfold classification of relic types found in Chinese Tantric literature as early as the eighth century, which includes *dharmadhātu-* and *dharmakāya-śarīra;*[1018] Hsueh-Man Shen cites Fachong 法崇 writing in ca. 763-

[1017] See Boucher for the evidence to support this assertion, which we need not repeat here.

[1018] See Lancaster, "Literary Sources", 201, and 204 n. 33. Incredibly, it seems that all but one of nine canonical references given in this note are erroneous; many of the pages to which we are referred do not mention relics at all, let alone mention the fourfold typology including *dharmakāya* relics. In one place alone can I see what Lancaster is referring to, Amoghavajra's 菩提場莊嚴陀羅尼經: 身舍利法界舍利骨舍利肉舍利 T1008.672c10-11. Unfortunately, when Lancaster seeks to explain what the category of *dharmakāyaśarīra* might mean he fares no better. Of three passages he gives 204 n. 34 to support his contention that these texts contain "a description of a *stūpa* that appears with the body of a former Buddha contained in it", a trope which he traces back to the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka,* 201, two (T1006.646a, T1022B.713b) mention no such thing. The other (T1023.715b), though it does indeed discuss relics which are by implication those of a former Buddha (since the Tathāgata Śākyamuni is depicted as circumambulating their *stūpa* and paying worship to them) otherwise has little to do with the *Lotus Sūtra* precedent, and is in fact primarily of interest for our study here for the very different point that it portrays the Buddha weeping at a broken-down old *stūpa* and yearning to see *both* the relics and the Buddhas of the ten directions, at which the relics miraculously well up from the mound and stand in the

764 clearly stating that the *dhāraṇī* is to be identified with the *dharmakāya* and is *therefore* the best of relics;[1019] and Shen also cites valuable evidence from Hōryūji 法隆寺 in Nara, where thousands of miniature *stūpas* containing copies of the *Raśmivimalaviśuddhaprabhā-dhāraṇī-sūtra*

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hands of the Buddhas (爾時釋迦牟尼如來 . . . . 又復思念舍利出現及十方佛悉皆出現。即時舍利從塔湧出。皆在十方諸佛如來手掌中住 T1023.715b27-c03). In any case, at no point does the text mention the notion of *dharmakāya,* let alone say anything to support Lancaster's claim that it supports the interpretation of *dharmakāyaśarīra* as the "whole-body relic" of a former Buddha that it is his main thesis to propose.

All of this regrettably means that Lancaster's initially suggestive thesis that Barabuḍur is perhaps to be interpreted as a "*dharmakāyastūpa*" in the terms of these Tantric texts is highly tendentious, to say the least. In fact, there are very few references to *dharmakāyaśarīra* (at least that I could locate) in the entire canon: in the name of a *mudrā* in one Amoghavajra text (法身設利妙智大印, T962.337a16-17); opposed to **saṃbhavakāyaśarīra* ("relic of body of birth"!) in Śubhākarasiṃha (T905.912a); and the same opposition in the 佛說造像量度經解, a very late text translated from Tibetan by Mngon po skyabs (active 1742-1743), which is clear that *dharmakāyaśarīra* (which are here *dhāraṇī* etc.) are superior (T1419.951a05-08). For our current purposes, this means that almost all we have to go on in these texts and those Lancaster cites is a bald statement in one text that a category of *dharmakāyaśarīra* exists, and very little grounds to flesh the category out with concrete content. See, however, the Amoghavajra passage cited in n. 1026 below for an assertion that a *dhāraṇī,* which as we see is elsewhere understood as a *dharmakāyaśarīra,* contains *all three* bodies of the Buddhas!

One other Amoghavajra passage that Lancaster refers to, though it still does not lay out the relic classification Lancaster would lead us to expect, gives the whole problematic a Tantric twist; anyone who obtains a relic *himself* becomes the relic of the Buddha and his true son, that is, the *dharmakāya* as the eternally enduring body of the Tathāgata Śākyamuni; he is Mahāvairocana, and so forth! 寶悉地成佛陀羅尼經: 若有善男子善女人。得佛設利乃至一粒分散一分信受受持。當知是人是佛設利真是佛子。即是法身釋迦牟尼如來常住之體。是人即名大毘盧遮那; T962.335c02-05.

It is possible that the materials studied by Eugene Wang from Famen si are part of this same broad pattern, but this suggestion can only be corroborated or denied by further research; see above, n. 952.

[1019] This text is a commentary on Buddhapāli's 佛陀波利 translation of the *Uṣṇīṣavijayādhāraṇī,* i.e. 佛頂尊勝陀羅尼經 T967; Buddhapāli, from Kashmir, was active at Qingliangshan 676-682, and again after 683 (HBGR *Répértoire* 238 s.v. Butsudahari); Fachong was a student of Amoghavajra (HBGR *Répértoire* 255 s.v. Hōjū). In the passage to hand, the root text states that a *stūpa* in which the *dhāraṇī* has been placed is a *stūpa* of the full-body relic (*ekaghanaśarīra*, for which see Skilling) of the Tathāgata T1803.1036c29. In commenting on this, Fachong states that the Buddha has two kinds of body that he produces out of his compassion for sentient beings, the fleshly body 肉身 and the *dharmakāya*; the former is the "physical form of the body" 身形像, and the latter comprised of wisdom 智慧. In what follows, which is slightly obscure, Fachong seems to play on the ambiguity of the Chinese *ti* ("body", but also "essence"). He says, "When we say *śarīra* in Sanskrit, it means *ti* ['body']; it is therefore [properly understood as actually referring to] the 'essence' [*ti*] of the *śarīra*. In this case, [then,] there is no need to install any other *śarīra* in the *stūpa*, since [in containing the *dhāraṇī*] it is precisely a *śarīrastūpa* (梵云設利羅。此云體也。即是舍利之體。今此塔中不須更安舍利。即是其舍利之塔也 (T1803.1037a12-18). The implication is clearly that the *dharmakāya,* being the true essence of the Buddha, is therefore the essence of his relics also; that the *dhāraṇī,* which comprises his essence *qua* his full wisdom, is therefore of the essence of the relic; and that any *stūpa* which contains the *dhāraṇī* is therefore every bit as much of a reliquary as anything can ever be, and there is no need for further material relics to supplement it.

were built between 767 and 768 in a practice clearly related to these ideas.[1020] Yael Bentor has studied a number of later Tibetan relic classifications that also speak of such a category, all in more or less the same terms. For mKhas-grub-rje (1385-1438), *dhāraṇīs* are **dharmakāyaśarīra;*[1021] for the Fifth Dalai Lama (1617-1682), this category comprises both *dhāraṇīs* and books,[1022] as it does for Kong-sprul Blo-gros mtha'-yas (1813-1899).[1023] Another classification refers, in addition to *dharmakāya* relics, to *dharmadhātu* relics.[1024] Cristina Scherrer-Schaub has also studied *dhāraṇī* that function as "*dharmakāya* relics".[1025]

In the same vein, Hsueh-Man Shen has presented rich evidence from Liao relic deposits, in which *dhāraṇī* are referred to as "relics" in inscriptions on wrappings, and inscriptions on the structure itself refer to *dhāraṇī* in the centre of the deposit room as *fasheli* 法舍利, **dharmaśarīra*. Pagodas (i.e. *stūpas*) containing these items and bearing these legends are inscribed with the legend *fashelita* 法舍利塔, **dharmaśarīrastūpa*. A formerly lost text recovered from one of the same excavations cites Amoghavajra's (705-774) *Yiqie rulai xin mimi quanshen sheli baoqie yin tuoluoni jing* (一切如來心祕密全身舍利寶篋印陀羅尼經, *Sarvatathāgatâdhiṣṭhānahṛdayaguhyadhātukaraṇḍamudrā-dhāraṇī-sūtra* T1022A, T1022B) to spell

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1020 Shen, "Realizing the Buddha's *Dharma* Body" 295, Figs 27 and 28.

1021 Bentor, "Tibetan Relic Classifications" 16.

1022 Bentor, "Tibetan Relic Classifications" 17.

1023 Bentor, "Tibetan Relic Classifications" 18. Unfortunately, it seems to me, Bentor's discussion of the significance of the term *dharmakāya* in this context goes well beyond what is warranted by her texts, and is on the whole merely speculative; 19.

1024 Bentor, "Tibetan Relic Classifications" 21.

1025 Scherrer-Schaub, "Some *Dhāraṇī*". Citing lCang skya ngag dbang Blo bzang chos ldan (1642-1716): "'The relics of the *dharmakāya* are like the profound *dhāraṇī* . . . . The Buddha has proclaimed, "Vajrapāṇi, if someone writes this *dharma-paryāya* and places it in a *stūpa,* the [*stūpa*] will become the shrine of the relic of the essence of the *vajra* of all the Tathāgatas. It will become the shrine for the sustaining power (*byin gyis brlabs pa* [=*adhiṣṭhāna*]) of the secret essence of the *dhāraṇī* of all the Tathāgatas"';" 718.

out the status of one such *dhāraṇī* as a relic, and precisely what it means: "[T1022] says: 'The Buddha told Vajrasattva Bodhisattva that the entire-body *śarīras* of all Buddhas, including those of the future, of the past, and those who entered *nirvāṇa,* all exist in the *Baoqie yin tuoluoni* [= *kāraṇḍamudrādhāraṇī*]. *All these Buddha's three bodies are also present in it.*"[1026] And indeed, perhaps the most exciting part of the evidence Shen considers is the depiction of the three bodies of the Buddha on reliquary boxes[1027] and as part of the iconography of the *stūpas* themselves.[1028] On a different face of the very same reliquary box, moreover, is engraved a *parinirvāṇa* scene (a common trope in reliquary art),[1029] in which the Buddha is clearly identifiable as Vairocana;[1030] and Vairocana is also a theme in other parts of the overall iconographic programme of these *stūpas.*[1031] Vairocana is, of course, central to the Tantric currents represented by the Amoghavajra texts in which we find the warrant for this practice, and he is, moreover, a *dharmakāya* Buddha. Iconography, text, inscriptions and the presence of *dhāraṇī* among the relic deposits all combine to express the same central idea: that the "relic" (*śarīra,* "body") enshrined in the *stūpa* is no less than the most rarefied *dharmakāya* ("body") of the Buddha itself; these various signs pointing to this mystery are merely facets of a prism that refract a broken image of that body to our imperfect worldly eyes.

[1026] Shen, "Realizing the Buddha's *Dharma* Body" 272; my emphasis. Shen does not trace the Amoghavajra quote, but the text is surely citing the following: 此是一切如來未來現在及已般涅槃者全身舍利。皆在寶篋陀羅尼中。是諸如來所有三身亦在是中 T1022A.711b27-29.

[1027] Shen, "Realizing the Buddha's *Dharma* Body" Figs 24-25.

[1028] Shen, "Realizing the Buddha's *Dharma* Body" Fig 21, where the three bodies are identified by an inscription as Shen notes 290.

[1029] Shen, "Realizing the Buddha's *Dharma* Body" Figs 22-23.

[1030] Shen, "Realizing the Buddha's *Dharma* Body" 290.

[1031] Shen, "Realizing the Buddha's *Dharma* Body" Figs 32, 35-36, 289-291.

As even these brief comments show, the topic of *dharmakāyaśarīra* is potentially a very rich one, and scholars have barely begun to scratch the surface. To date, the various scholars I have cited above have largely worked in isolation from the broad pan-Buddhist context in which their evidence has its largest meaning.[1032] Certainly, I would urge, we already have enough evidence in hand to know that the notion of *dharmakāyaśarīra,* in various senses but particular understood as instantiated in certain *dhāraṇī,* spread quickly across East Asia in the eighth century, was vital enough to remain a major category driving cultic activity under the Liao, and was significant throughout the second millennium in Tibet, and probably had some solid Indian precedents also.[1033]

For our current purposes, however, the significance of this fact is plain: it clearly shows, once more, that across a very significant range of Buddhist traditions and history, the categories of "relic" and "body" were mutually commensurable, commutable, and interpenetrable.

Even this rough first sweep across the vast and rich territory comprised by the various equivalences drawn and dialectics engaged between relics and other bodies of the Buddha, then, shows amply that this is a large and hitherto insufficiently recognised dimension to the study of Buddhist relics, one which will richly reward extensive further study. For the present, large swathes of the later history of relics as bodies, and the relations between them as such and other bodies, remain unstudied, and those aspects of the territory that have been studied still warrant reconsideration in the broader context of other ideas about embodiment of the sacred

[1032] Bentor discusses possible Chinese sources for a similar classification she finds in her Tibetan materials; "Tibetan Relic Classifications", 21. Otherwise, even Shen, as the most recent of the scholars cited here, does not show any awareness of these precedents in the literature and the parallels elsewhere in the Buddhist world to which they point, though he very aptly places his Liao evidence in a broader East Asian perspective including Korea and Japan.

[1033] On the last point, see Bentor, "On the Indian Origins".

in Buddhism. This is obviously not the place to essay such an ambitious project. But I hope that the rough outline of the vast field demarcated by the relationship and dialectic that inheres between relics and other bodies has at least sufficed to show that relics are indeed regarded and treated as bodies among other bodies by many parts of the Buddhist tradition in many important respects, and that the study of relics as bodies therefore has a rightful and important place in a history of Buddhist concepts of embodiment like this one.

The next question, obviously, is how early relics have or acquire this meaning, and it is to that question that I now turn, with the intention of showing that relics are in fact the best candidate we have for the title of the earliest special ideal embodiment of full Buddhahood, and therefore constitute, in a sense, the hitherto overlooked fountainhead of the whole problematic of "Buddha bodies" in its entirety.

4.1.2 Earliest evidence for the cult of relics

I turn first to the examination evidence for the cult of relic in the Pāli-canonical period. We will see here that while there is ample evidence that the cult of the relics was already under way in this period, there is not sufficient evidence to show that they were regarded as bodies of the Buddha, especially once we have excluded from consideration the very early Bajaur Inscription, of which Schopen has made so much, following Falk's arguments that it is fake.

4.1.2.1 The division, dispersal and interment of relics in the *Mahāparinibbāna-sutta*

Relics are material objects; the study of relics has benefited greatly from increased attention to extratextual forms of evidence like archaeology and epigraphy; and the study of relics has occasionally been held to require us to radically revise the picture of Buddhism we derive from our texts. It is somewhat ironic, then, that the earliest piece of firm evidence we have for the

cult of relics may still be textual: the famous passages in the *Mahāparinibbāna-sutta* (DN 16) detailing the division of the relics of the Buddha after his cremation, the dispute between various kings over claims to them, and the subsequent enshrinement of the relics.

I will begin by giving a brief outline of the parts of the text relevant to relics, before analysing those dimensions of the text relevant to the questions we are addressing here.

It is important to note that despite the vast confusion that has surrounded this point historically, there is, as Gregory Schopen has clearly shown, a key distinction to be observed between the term *sarīra* "body" in the singular, and *sārīrāni* "relics" (lit. "bodies") in the plural, as they are used in the text of the *Mahāparinibbāna-sutta*.[1034] It is quite clear that the singular is used to refer to the body of the Buddha during the seven days that the text says intervene between his *parinibbāna* and his cremation. The plural, by contrast, is used to refer to his relics, that is, the sole remnants left after the otherwise complete destruction of his body (*sarīra,* singular) in the funeral fire. This means that the passages in the text dealing with what is called *sarīrapūja,* which Schopen has translated as "worship of the body" but which he states clearly actually refers to the funeral rites for the body up until and including the cremation, has little if anything to do with the cult of relics, despite the fact that the inclusion of the term *sarīra* in the compound has led many interpreters, traditional and modern, to understand it as precisely about that cult.[1035] For our purposes here, therefore, we can disregard everything

[1034] Schopen, "Monks and the Relic Cult". Recently Jonathan Silk has examined the Chinese parallels to these passages, and relic language in some other Chinese texts, in great detail. His findings on the whole corroborate the existence of the distinction for which Schopen first argued on the basis only of Indic sources, though Silk also shows that in certain key cases, there is terminological confusion in the Chinese texts, which may indicate that by the time the translations were produced (the bulk of them dating from the fourth century or later), the distinction between "body" (singular) and "relic" (perhaps by this time also known in the singular as well as the plural) may not have been as clear. See Silk, *Body Language.*

[1035] As Schopen himself notes ("Monks and the Relic Cult" 195-197), the key distinction here must have been obscure already by the time of the *Milindapañha,* since one of its "dilemmas" hinges on the

prior to the cremation in the text, and pick the story up at the point where the relics are first produced.[1036]

When the body of the Buddha is burnt, we encounter the first instance of *sarīra* in the plural (*sārīrāni*): "When the Lord's body (*sarīra*) was burnt, what had been skin, under-skin, flesh, sinew, or joint-fluid, all that vanished and not even ashes or dust remained, only the *sārīrāni* remained."[1037] Thus the text accounts for the origin of the *sārīrāni* which, as we shall see, will momentarily become the focus of the dispute between the kings, and eventually become the objects of the cult; they were the sole remnants of the Buddha's "body" *sarīra*.

After the description of the burning of the funeral fire and its quenching, the text says that the Mallas, who were overseeing the funeral proceedings, "honoured the *sārīrāni*[1038] for a week in their assembly hall", having fortified the place specially for the purpose, "with dancing, singing, garlands and music".[1039]

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perception of apparent conflict between the Tathāgata's prohibition of monastic involvement in *sarīrapūja* here and the injunction of *Vimānavatthu* to "Venerate that relic of him who is to be venerated". See Horner I, 249-254.

[1036] This point marked in the narrative by the transition from singular to plural is clearly identified by Schopen, "Monks and the Relic Cult" 190.

[1037] Walshe 275, translation altered. *jhāyamānassa kho pana bhagavato sarīrassa, yaṃ ahosi chavīti vā cammanti mā maṃsanti vā naharū ti vā lasikā ti vā tassa neva chārikā paññāyittha, na masi. sārīrāneca avasissiṃsu.* Note that Walshe translates "only the bones remained", to which he gives a note, "*Sarīra:* bones (*later* interpreted as the indestructible substance supposed to be found in the ashes of Arahants)"; 576, n. 461. Walshe does not say what evidence he has for this reading of the term here, however, and I cannot help but suspect that he makes it on the sole basis of rationalist-apologetic assumptions about what materially *could* have been the case at the actual historical cremation of the Buddha. I see no grounds for such confidence that we know that the text means by *sarīrāni,* and have thus preferred to leave the term untranslated for purposes of discussion.

[1038] Inexplicably, Walshe now translates "relics", where he so delicately insisted upon "bones" only a few lines before.

[1039] Walshe 275. *bhagavato sārīrāni sattāhaṃ santhāgāre sattipañjaraṃ karitvā dhanupākāraṃ parikkhipāpetvā naccehi gītehi vāditehi mālehi gandhehi sakkariṃsu garukariṃsu mānesuṃ pūjesuṃ.* Walshe does not translate *gandhehi* "with scents" ("with perfumes" Rhys Davids).

Then the rival kings arrive in sequence, and each claims a right to a share of the relics with the formula, "I am worthy to receive a share of the Lord's *sārīrāni.*[1040] I will make a great stupa for them."[1041] The Mallas, however, refuse these claims, saying, "We will not give away any share of the Lord's *sārīrāni.*"[1042]

The Brahmin Doṇa then intervenes with a well-chosen verse: "It is not right that strife should come/ From sharing out the best of men's remains (*uttamapuggalassa sarīrabhāge*)."[1043] Once more, the point that relics require the erection of *stūpas* is reiterated: "Let stupas far and wide be put up."[1044] As a result, Doṇa is entrusted with the task of dividing up the *sārīrāni*,[1045] and then takes the urn in which they were contained for himself, over which a *stūpa* is erected just as for the relics themselves.

The text concludes[1046] by describing, again with a repeated formula, how each of the recipients of an eighth portion of the relics "built a great *stūpa* for the Lord's *sārīrāni*".[1047]

[1040] Walshe now translates "remains", his third alternate translation in a very short space! Hereafter he sticks to "remains".

[1041] Walshe 275-276; *ahampi arahāmi bhagavato sārīrānaṃ bhāgaṃ. ahampi bhagavato sārīrānaṃ thūpañca mahañca karissāmi.*

[1042] Walshe 276; *na mayaṃ dassāma bhagavato sārīrānaṃ bhāganti.*

[1043] Walshe 276; *na hi sādhu'yaṃ uttamapuggalassa/ sarīrabhāge siyā sampahāro.*

[1044] Walshe 276; *vitthārikā hontu disāsu thūpā.*

[1045] Walshe 276; *tena hi brāhmaṇa tvaññeva bhagavato sārīrāni aṭṭhadhā samaṃ suvibhattaṃ vibhajāhī . . . . bhagavato sārīrāni aṭṭhadhā samaṃ suvibhattaṃ vibhajitvā.*

[1046] For obvious reasons, I omit the concluding verses, which Walshe, after Buddhaghosa, considers to have been added by "the Sinhalese Elders"; Walshe 277, 576 n. 464.

[1047] Walshe 276-277; *bhagavato sārīrānaṃ thūpañca mahañca akaṃsu.*

These episodes have already been very much discussed in the secondary literature, and it is not my intention to go again over the ground already covered in those studies. For our current purposes, the most important points are the following.

First, the text clearly recognises that relics are very valuable and powerful, by the authoritative narrative precedent of the contestation and disposition of the Buddha's own relics at the hands of the powerful kings. The simple existence of such a text is quite firm evidence that at the date of its composition (a question to which we will turn immediately below), relics were already hot property and highly regarded among some Buddhist groups, and further that these views were common and influential enough for such a text to be composed (and eventually attain canonical status).

The text also gives the additional detail that relics were enshrined in *stūpas.* Each of the vying kings declares his intent to erect a *stūpa* expressly *for* the relics he claims (*bhagavato sārīrānaṃ thūpañca mahañca karissāmi*); Doṇa's verses explicitly present the dispersal of the relics as having the advantage that *stūpas* will be erected "far and wide"; and all recipients of a portion are shown to erect a *stūpa* in due course. It appears that at the time when the text was composed, the erection of a *stūpa* was already the done thing for relics, to the extent that kings could be presented as having to promise to erect one in order for their claims to be regarded as serious; indeed, the connection between *stūpas* and relics occupies so much space in the text that we must assume that the reinforcement of that connection is one of the main purposes of the text. We must be careful to note, of course, that on the basis of these passages alone, we have no knowledge of how people were expected to behave towards the resulting *stūpas,* or indeed, towards relics themselves, short of interring them in *stūpas;* the text thus falls one step

short of providing us with any full evidence of a "relic cult" in this period, if by "cult" we mean worship *activity,* and this is all the information to be found in MPNS about relics.[1048]

It does seem, however, that on the basis of this passage, we are justified at least in the cautious conclusion that at the time of its composition, the enshrinement of relics in *stūpas* was a current practice, and therefore that *stūpa*-like constructions we find dating from that period and later *may* have served a reliquary function and constitute evidence for the reliquary cult – though others among them may have served a memorial (*caitya*) function, like those at the "four sites" (the Buddha's birthplace, the *bodhi* tree, the site of the first sermon, and the site of his *parinibbāna*). If Bareau is right about the date of this text (see immediately below), this would, of course, mean that this possibility is open for almost all the *stūpa*-like constructions still extant today, even the very earliest.

[1048] It may be possible, on the basis of the prominence of *stūpas* in this passage, to connect it with another well-known passage in which the Buddha gives instructions for the disposal of his body (*sarīra*) after the manner of a Wheel-Turning King; Walshe 264, repeated (in the mouth of Ānanda) at 274. However, little seems to be gained for the present discussion by making this link, which is in any case tenuous at best. The main point of contact between the two passages is that the last item in these instructions is that "they cremate the . . . body, and they raise a stupa at a crossroads;" Walshe 264; *cātummahāpathe . . . thūpaṃ karonti.* Similarly, "A stupa should be erected at the crossroads for the Tathāgata;" Walshe 264; *cātummahāpathe tathāgatassa thūpo kātabbo.* We must note that throughout this passage giving instructions for funerary procedures, the plural *sārīrāni* is never used, a distinction we must observe carefully in light of Schopen's cogent arguments about the systematic distinction between "body" (singular) and "relics" (plural). We must further note that nothing in the passage says that the relics should be interred within the *stūpa*; it is possible that here, the *stūpa* is simply a memorial monument. A further difference of detail is that the "war of the relics" passages never mention that *stūpas* must be erected at a crossroads, though this point is emphasised in the instructions passage. The only point the two passages have in common, therefore, is that they both depict the erection of a *stūpa* following upon the cremation as a part of the normal order of affairs. If the distinction Schopen draws between *caitya* and *stūpa* holds, then, it is possible that here we actually see the vestiges of a an entirely different set of memorialising practices, in which relics have no part. It is also possible, however, that this passage is referring to the practice of interment of relics in *stūpas* as an integral part of the procedures for disposing of and memorialising the physical remains of a Tathāgata (and, of course, according to the passage under discussion here, Paccekabuddhas, wheel-turning monarchs, and disciples of the Tathāgata; Walshe 264-265), and that one of the passages is consciously echoing the other.

It is also important, for our purposes, that the term used for the relics here is *sarīrāni*, "bodies" – precisely the terminology that has led to the historical confusion between stipulations for the funeral arrangements treating the Tathāgata's corpse and stipulations for the relic cult, which has been so deftly untangled by Schopen. I will return to the topic of this terminology below.

This *Mahāparinibbāna-sutta* passage, then, is evidence that at the time of its composition, relics were regarded as very valuable and precious, enshrined in *stūpas,* and referred to as *sarīrāni*. The question is, of course – when was the text composed? To what era are we to refer this evidence?

The closest studies of the accretional formation and relative dating of the *Mahāparinibbāna-sutta* and cognate texts transmitted in other Buddhist lineages have of course been made by André Bareau. Bareau considers that the entirety of the larger section of the text within which the material about relics is found (Bareau's Part IX) was already almost fully formed by the time of Aśoka.[1049] Bareau forms this conclusion on the basis of the fact that the bulk of the text is present and identical in essentials in all or nearly all of six versions of the text that have come down to us.[1050] Bareau assumes that the various lineages through which the versions of the text were transmitted underwent large-scale geographic dispersion at the time of the Aśokan missions, and that it was therefore at this time that the various versions of their texts began undergoing independent development; any agreement between the versions is thus held to predate that dispersion (much as any genetic material common to two biological species is understood to date back to their common evolutionary ancestor).

[1049] Bareau, "Composition" 69.

[1050] As Bareau notes, these versions of the text cover a wide range of Buddhist languages and sectarian affiliations. They are: (1) the Pāli, which is "Theravādin"; (2) the Sanskrit, which is Mūlasarvâstivādin; and four Chinese versions, namely (3) a Dharmaguptaka version; and (4-6) three whose sectarian origins are obscure; see Bareau 45.

It is not necessary for us to rehearse here the entirety of Bareau's complex analysis of the bloc of text of which the relics section forms a part.[1051] With regard to the particular passages that bear on relics, Bareau divides the whole into four sub-episodes for the purposes of his analysis: (1) the threat of conflict between the Mallas of Kusinagara and various other groups of the faithful who also stake a claim to a share in the relics; (2) the peaceable negotiation of this conflict of interest by a Brahman and the consequent division of the relics; (3) the construction of *stūpas* to serve as reliquary monuments; (4) the arrival of the two groups of latecomers, who are given respectively the ashes of the fire and the urn in which the relics were held. Bareau notes that of these four sub-episodes, the first three appear in all six of the extant versions of the text*;* the fourth, however, is absent from one version of the *sūtra;* all four episodes appear in addition in the Sarvâstivādin Vinaya.[1052] Bareau argues that the absence of this entire episode from all but one of the Vinaya transmission lineages implies that it is a relatively recent addition to the text, post-dating the specialisation of separate Vinaya and *sūtra* transmission lineages.[1053] On Bareau's dating methodology, it is further implied that the last of the four sub-episodes, being absent from one version of the *sūtra,* is even later still, and Bareau suggests this explicitly.[1054] We must bear in mind, however, that Bareau strives to arrive at a very finely gradated chronology of the composition of the text, and that all these questions of "relatively" early and late are to be understood within the framework of his overall conclusion that the *entirety* of this episode pre-dates Aśoka, as we have already seen above. In fact, Bareau

[1051] Bareau, "Composition" 69-76.

[1052] Bareau, "Composition" 70, 76.

[1053] Bareau suggests that the Sarvâstivādin Vinaya parallel must have been borrowed into that context late from one or the other of the *sūtra* versions, otherwise we would expect it to appear in more of the transmission lineages of the Vinaya texts; 70.

[1054] Bareau, "Composition" 76.

supposes, perhaps not unreasonably, that the narrative of the dispute over the relics and their dispersal as the result of its resolution is a *post hoc* invention, a kind of aetiological myth, designed to explain a cult that had already existed in a geographically dispersed manner for long enough *before* the composition of the narrative that the actual origins of the situation were no longer fresh; on this basis, he argues that the text actually enables us to push the origin of the relic cult back perhaps another century earlier than Aśoka himself.[1055]

For our purposes, however, these finer speculations about the relative dates of parts of the text or the practices to which it attests are not of ultimate importance, and it is already more than enough if, as Bareau argues, the text, and therefore the basic fact of worship of relics in *stūpas* to which it attests, date back to before Aśoka at the latest. As I said above, this alone would already make the text the earliest evidence of the relic cult, and establish that the worship of relics, significantly referred to as *sarirāni* ("bodies"), dates back quite far before the usual date given for the closing of the Pāli canon as a whole around 100 B.C.E.

But is Bareau right about the date of the text? The criteria Bareau applies in arriving at this date have been criticised by Gregory Schopen. In one of his less successful arguments, Schopen has polemicised against what he calls "the cardinal tenet of . . . 'higher criticism", which he paraphrases fairly accurately as holding that "if all known sectarian versions of a text or passage agree, that text or passage must be very old; that is, it must come from a presectarian stage of the tradition."[1056] Against this principle, Schopen levels two main objections.

[1055] Bareau, "Composition" 76.

[1056] Schopen, "Two Problems" 25-26.

First, Schopen objects that "we do not know when the sectarian period began".[1057] This, it seems to me, is potentially the more serious of his objections. He points out that various traditions give various different chronologies of successive schisms; and that we do not see sectarian labels appear in the inscriptional record until the second century C.E. This objection certainly requires serious consideration, and bears most closely on whatever absolute dates we might be able to ascribe to materials by applying what Schopen calls the "cardinal tenet of higher criticism". It does not seem to me, however, that it is anywhere forceful enough an objection to require us to doubt the very existence of any differentiation in transmission lineages prior to the appearance of sectarian labels in the inscriptional record; but in order to lay out my reasons for this conclusion, we must first dispense with the second of Schopen's objections.

Schopen's second objection is that all the material to which we apply the "cardinal tenet" is itself very late.[1058] By this he seems primarily to mean that extant *material exemplars* of these texts are very late, referring principally to manuscripts; he seems to have in mind here the comparison with inscriptions, his sources of choice, of which, of course, no-one can complain that they have been tampered with in the interim. Schopen claims that since all our exemplars of our texts are late, we have no way of knowing how they arrived at the state in which they first enter the extant material record:

> "Once this is taken fully into account, any agreement between the sources is open to a very different, if not the very opposite interpretation. The cardinal tenet may then have to be framed in the following form: If all known versions of a text or passage agree, that text or passage is probably late: that is, it probably represents the results of the conflation and gradual levelling and harmonization of earlier existing traditions."[1059]

[1057] Schopen, "Two Problems" 26.

[1058] Schopen, "Two Problems" 26-27.

[1059] Schopen, "Two Problems" 27.

Frankly, I find this suggestion incredible, and it seems short-sighted to even suggest it. Certainly it seems that such a suggestion could only be made with little concrete consideration of the actual processes that might be involved in such a "conflation and gradual levelling".[1060]

Whether or not the Aśokan dispersion to which Bareau appeals in order to justify his dating of our present text was attended by sectarian difference or not (let alone precisely the same sectarian landscape reported to us by the much later doxographical sources), the *sheer fact* of geographic dispersion, in and of itself, already suffices to make it extremely unlikely that widespread agreement of multiple versions could be achieved by any process such as Schopen envisages. The existence of such separate traditions, let us recall, is proven by the many and intricate differences we observe between their texts and canons, regardless of whether or not those transmission traditions were associated with sectarian identities; in order that such already separate transmission traditions could have attained the kind of uniformity we observe in our six extant versions of the MPNS under consideration here, for example, Schopen's suggestion would require that in a period *posterior* to differentiation into different transmission lineages (which he assumes explains the differences that exist between texts), *all* transmission lineages not only had physical access to a single prototypical text, transmitted at whatever remove with exact fidelity; but that they also accepted that text, and chose to "conflate" and "harmonize" their own version with it – that is, that they bowed to the outside authority of other lineages perhaps geographically remote from them, in preference to their own traditions. Such a prospect is simply unbelievable in the pre-modern period, however.

[1060] This is ironical, of course, given that Schopen usually places such strong emphasis on the material, and this is a question of the material requirements for the transmission of texts.

We know (e.g. exactly from the archaeological and inscriptional evidence that Schopen tends to lean on so heavily, without even having to rely on textually transmitted accounts of sectarian schism) that Buddhism did indeed achieve quite a wide geographic spread from around the time of Aśoka, and that by the turn of the common era, for instance, it was present in places as far-flung as Sri Lanka and modern Pakistan. How does Schopen imagine that at this point in history, people *could* have achieved absolute textual uniformity across such a wide area, even had they wanted to? Certainly, it is conceivable that individual texts could have been transmitted with the necessary fidelity across large distances, either by travel of reciters or by writing when it came into use. But Schopen is asking us to imagine a large-scale operation, and one that repeatedly arrived at complete or almost complete unanimity across the entire Buddhist world. This would require an impossible level of organised and frequent exchange, comparison, and correction of texts.

Further, we must also remember that even after the adoption of writing, texts were still memorised, that is, they were preserved and transmitted orally, for a very long period and by very large numbers of people, people over whom, moreover, there was no concerted institutional control, but who rather populated a very diverse, decentralised and even balkanised institutional landscape. The oral mode of transmission requires a large investment of human time, but for Schopen's scenario to be plausible, we must further imagine that at some point in the transmission history of a text, entire communities could be persuaded to abandon the version of the text they already knew, that is, in which they were so heavily invested not only conceptually but economically, and undergo the expensive and painstaking process of "retooling" with the new "improved" version. Once more, in order to attain the wide or even full unanimity we observe in the case of those texts the "cardinal tenet" tells us is oldest, we would further have to imagine that not just some people, but *absolutely everyone* was

willing to undergo this retooling process – that there were no holdout pockets of resistance to the new ideas – and that they were willing to undergo it repeatedly. The history of ideas in periods for which we have richer data, and are not forced to rely entirely upon hypothetical reconstruction from later evidence, tells us that this sort of universal consensus is very hard to come by, and yet Schopen asks us to imagine it as one of the major forces that shaped the textual traditions as we receive them today.[1061]

In short, Schopen's second objection to the "cardinal tenet" upon which Bareau's dating is based cannot hold water, and I therefore see no reason in it, alone, to doubt Bareau's arguments.

This brings us back to Schopen's first objection – that we do not know the date from which sectarian divisions began. Certainly, this is to some degree true, and I also believe that prior scholarship has placed too much faith in the details of quite late doxography (see Chapter 4.2 on doctrines attributed to the Mahāsāṃghika, in particular). To talk in terms of sects, then, as if sectarian divisions are the primary determinant for differentiation of textual lineages, muddies the waters somewhat. However, I hope that my discussion above, with reference to the actual concrete logistics and mechanics of textual transmission, will have made it clear that the primary factor at play here is not sectarian schism, but rather, simple geographic and institutional dispersal, which render the logistics of subsequently "manufacturing consent" so

[1061] We might think, for example, of the Chinese Buddhist tradition, where there was certainly, at least until the Tang, a strong tendency to look to India as the source of orthodoxy, and where there was a continued and concerted effort to keep abreast of latest developments accompanied by a more or less steady influx of highly regarded texts. The textual history of Buddhism in China is, moreover, punctuated by periodic imperially sponsored efforts to determine and stabilise orthodoxy and redefine the canon. Even in this situation, which should be ideal grounds for "conflation and harmonising" processes like those Schopen envisages, we have multiple, often widely varying versions of the same text, and it was frequently the case that newer translations (famously, some of those of Xuanzang) were disregarded in favour of older, "outmoded" models.

difficult as to virtually rule it out on any large scale. This mutual isolation of transmission lineages, determined at base by a combination of raw geography and the state of travel and communications technology, is already sufficient, I believe, to allow the application of the "cardinal tenet" with good prospects of success. It is even possible that sectarian differences *followed* upon geographic dispersal, along with differentiation in transmission and contents of texts, but that would not matter. It does not matter much whether the version of a text that ultimately comes down to us as, say, "Mahāsāṃghika" in fact carried that sectarian label from the very first moment that it came free of other versions of the text and began its independent evolution, and what concerns us for dating purposes is not the moment at which the label came into being or vogue, but rather the moment at which the entire body of *text* in which the text is found began to differentiate itself from its fellows.

Viewed in this light, it seems, the vast majority of the many and sometimes large-scale islands of agreement between textual lineages and their very complex distribution can only, it seems to me, be explained as the vestiges of an original stock common to the various lineages, exactly as the "cardinal tenet" states. The vague mechanisms of "conflation and harmonization" conjured up by Schopen might only, at best, explain certain exceptional cases in which agreement is attained subsequent to the differentiation of textual lineages *despite* the logistical obstacles. This possibility must certainly be kept in mind, and it should perhaps make us take some conclusions that stem only from the application of the "cardinal tenet" with a grain of salt; but even so, it is hardly believable that it could account for widespread agreement across *six* different transmission lineages, and a Vinaya parallel, in a text so pivotal as that describing the *parinirvāṇa* of the Buddha.[1062] If, further, the primary condition that is required for texts to

[1062] Schopen's arguments should certainly be kept in mind, however, when considering the possibility of limited interpolation and adjustment of texts to accommodate isolated elements that are known to have had great cache in some traditions, but which only appear in rare instances in others. Such, for example, are the "one-off" instances that run like a methodological theme through our materials – the single

begin the process of independent evolution is not sectarian schism and doctrinal disagreement, but rather plain mutual isolation, then it seems to me that it is quite reasonable to follow Bareau and regard the Aśokan dispersal as the watershed event that precipitated this process.[1063]

Therefore, we can conclude that Bareau is most likely right, and that the ideas about relics we have examined in the *Mahāparinibbāna-sutta* most probably date to before his time. As I began this section by saying, this means that the *Mahāparinibbāna-sutta* is probably our earliest evidence testifying that relics were regarded as important, and that their special treatment, of which we know only that they were enshrined in multiple *stūpas* across a wide area with likely political overtones, was already a way in which Buddhists of the time memorialised the Buddha.

For the purposes of our current argument, we can further note that even if Bareau is wrong, and this text does not date back before Aśoka, it is still found in the Pāli canon, and therefore even on its own constitutes irrefutable evidence that the ideas to which it testifies were known before the closing of that canon.

We must also note, however, that though the MPNS provides strong evidence that the cult of relics in *stūpas* was probably current before the time of Aśoka, nothing in the text suggests that relics were regarded as bodies of the Buddha, except the use of the term *sarīrāni* itself.

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instances in the Pāli canon of later important concepts like *dhammakāya, rūpakāya,* the "corporeal" sense of *sopādi-* and *anupādisesa,* the Buddha's assumption of a *manomayakāya* to teach Anuruddha, and so on. In such cases, it seems to me, we must consider the possibility that the currency of these concepts later and elsewhere led to them finding their way, in these isolated instances, into the Pāli canon, despite our usual assumptions about the date the Pāli canon was "closed".

[1063] On this point, and other further cogent reasons for rejecting Schopen's criticisms of the "cardinal tenet" but rather expecting that our best knowledge of earliest Buddhism will still come from texts, see Wynne, "How Old is the Suttapiṭaka?".

4.1.2.2 *Sārīrāni* and *dhātu* in other parts of the Pāli canon

It seems often to be understood that this MNPS passage is the only passage in the Pāli Nikāyas that mentions *sārīrāni* as relics in any clearly identifiable sense. However, further passages are relevant to our discussion here.

It may not be entirely irrelevant to the question of relics to examine a curious passage in SN 12.51, "Suffering". This text describes "a bhikkhu . . . making a thorough investigation", which means in this case that the *bhikkhu* discerns fully the twelvefold chain of causation that leads to repeated rebirth in the world of suffering, and by that discernment learns to stop the cycle and attains Nibbāna.[1064] The result is that he enters into a state in which "If he feels a pleasant feeling, he understands: 'It is impermanent'; he understands: 'It is not held to'; he understands: 'It is not delighted in',", and so too for painful feelings and feelings that are neither painful nor pleasant. As a further part of the description of this state, the text goes on,

> "When he feels a feeling terminating with the body, he understands, 'I feel a feeling terminating with the body.'[1065] When he feels a feeling terminating with life, he understands: 'I feel a feeling terminating with life.' He understands: 'With the breakup of the body (*kāyassa bhedā*), following the exhaustion of life, all that is felt, not being delighted in, will become cool right here; mere bodily remains (*sarīrāni*) will be left."[1066]

The text then explains the process that leads to only these *sarīrāni* remaining of the monk with the analogy of a pot which, having been baked in the kiln by the potter, is removed and set on

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[1064] Bodhi 586-588.

[1065] *so kāyapariyantikaṃ vedanaṃ vedayamāno kāyapariyantikaṃ vedanaṃ vedayāmī'ti pajānāti.* The point seems to be that he understands even those feelings that continue as a kind of "background noise" throughout the lifetime of the body to be destined to cease at death, and through this understanding, does not become attached to them, which makes it possible for him to truly abandon the body and those attendant feelings at death and not seek rebirth in another body in order to continue them.

[1066] Bodhi 588. The final phrase in Pāli reads: *idheva sabbavedayitāni anabhinanditāni sīti bhavissanti. sarīrāni avasissanti.* I do not know why the plural *sarīrāni* here has the first "a" short, where MPNS gives a long "a" (*sārīrāni*).

the ground, and eventually cools so that all remains is mere "potsherds" (*kapallāni*). This figure sheds little light, however. First, it is not clear, where no mention is made of any event that would break the pot in addition to cooling it down, why a freshly made pot, even when cool, would end up as "potsherds". Second, the word Bodhi translates as "potsherds", *kapallāni,* is itself problematic: as Bodhi notes,[1067] the use of this word in the plural is unusual and confusing, since *kapilla*, usually in the singular, means an entire pot or bowl. Bodhi gets his translation as "pot*sherds*" from the sub-commentarial *Săratthappakāsinī-purāṇa-ṭīkā Saṃyutta-ṭīkā;* in other words, the plural *kapillāni* here was a puzzle for the commentarial tradition too, and we cannot be sure *what* it means, nor that the commentator knew what it meant, and was not just trying to rationalise the passage and make some sense out of it. Where Bodhi states that "the unusual use of the plural *sarīrāni* here mirrors the unusual use of the plural *kapillāni* to mean potsherds",[1068] then, it is equally possible that it would rather be more accurate to say the opposite – that the inexplicable plural *kapillāni* somehow mirrors the plural *sarīrāni.* This interpretation at least has the advantage of starting from a known quantity, if a quantity barely known in the canonical period – the established use of plural *sarīrāni* to refer to the special post-mortem remains of an enlightened being, which fits the current context perfectly. Indeed, this suggestion is strengthened by the fact that the root commentary, the *Sāratthappakāsinī Saṃyutta Nikāya-aṭṭakathā,* glosses *sarīrāni* here as *dhātusarīrāni;* Bodhi, who seems in his translation and note to betray something of a rationalising bent, translates this "bodily elements", but given the well-established use of *dhātu* to also mean "relics", it would be more

[1067] Bodhi 766 n. 141.

[1068] Bodhi 766 n. 141.

natural to take it in the sense of "*sarīrāni,* 'bodies', as in *dhātu,* 'relics'" (just as in English we use the redundant "funny ha-ha" to differentiate it from "funny peculiar").[1069]

While this passage gives us little to go on, therefore, it seems, given that the sole use of the plural *sarīrāni* (*sārīrāni*) elsewhere in the Pāli canon (in MPNS) clearly refers to relics as the remnants of the Tathāgata, that it is most consistent to understand it here to mean "relics" also. As I have already said, given that the context is a description of what remains of the body after the death of someone who has attained Nibbāna, this interpretation fits perfectly well with the context. This means that Bodhi's translation of *sarīrāni* here as "bodily remains" is too vague, and obscures an important early trace of the idea that enlightened beings have special post-mortem remains that justify the application of a special term.

For our current purposes, however, this passage unfortunately adds nothing to our concrete understanding of the content of the notion of relics in the Pāli-canonical period. All it adds to our examination of the questions to hand is one further slender piece of evidence that the concept of relics was already known by the close of the Pāli canon – though, given that we only have the MPNS passages otherwise, one more piece of evidence is certainly welcome – and it still does not, notably, provide any evidence of any cultic activity surrounding the relics.

Although no other passages in the Pāli canon, to my knowledge, discuss relics as *sārīrāni*, we do also find several mentions of relics under the name of *dhātu.*

[1069] In the same note, Bodhi cites further the *ṭīkā,* which glosses *dhātusarīrāni* as *aṭṭhikakaṇkala,* which "bones" (PTS *Dict* gives "skeleton" for *aṭṭhikaṇkala,* s.v.). We might remember here, however, that bones were also a known variety of relic, and that relics are on occasion referred to as "bones".

In a passage in *Vimānavatthu* 7.8, "Mansions of Divers Hue" (*anekavaṇṇavimāna*), a deva-youth explains to Mahā-Moggallāna that he earned his current wonderful rebirth by the merit of having encouraging his fellows to worship the relics of the Buddha Sumedha after the latter had entered *parinirvāṇa*. "I roused the others there: 'Pay homage to that relic of him who is worthy of homage; thus, it is said, you will go to heaven."[1070]

Further evidence of the relic cult is also found in the *Vimānavatthu* 4.9, "Yellow Mansion" (*pītavimāna*). The text begins by describing a poor laywoman who goes to the *stūpa* erected by Ajātasattu for his shared of the Tathāgata's relics at Rājagaha, to make an offering of flowers "bitter, not prized",[1071] but is gored to death by a cow. She is reborn in the realm of the Thirty-Three, and says, as part of her explanation to the king of devas how she came there that her mind was so "devout towards the teacher's relics (*sarīra*)", her "attention wrapt upon it",[1072] that she failed to avoid the cow and was slain, her "longing for the thūpa unfulfilled."[1073] A god draws the moral of the story for us: "Even a trifle done for one meriting a gift is (a deed of) merit, of great fruit. When the mind has faith no gift is trifling (when given) to the Tathāgata or a Self-Awakened One or to his disciples . . . . Happy is the accumulation of merits the relics (*dhātuyo*) of the Tathāgata (provide)."[1074]

Similarly, *Vimānavatthu* 5.13, "Little Chariot Mansion" (*cūḷarathavimāna*), tells the story of a prince, Sujāta, who went to the forest life and was ordained in the holy life by Mahā-Kaccāna.

[1070] Horner, *Vimānavatthu* 143; *pūjetha naṃ pūjanīyassa dhātuṃ/ evaṃ kira saggamito gamissatha.*

[1071] Horner, *Vimānavatthu* 95.

[1072] *satthu sarīramuddissa vippasannena cetasā . . . tadaggamanasā sati.*

[1073] *thūpaṃ appattamānasaṃ;* Horner, *Vimānavatthu* 95.

[1074] Horner, *Vimānavatthu* 95-96.

Mahā-Kaccāna sees that the prince's life will end in five months, and urges him to make merit while he has time, which he does, as a result of which he is reborn in the realm of the Thirty-Three. At the end of the tale, the prince returns in his *deva*-form to visit his teacher, and verses he utters make clear the nature of his merit-making activity: "Knowing my life-span was ending, you gave me a relic of the teacher, saying: Honour this, Sujāta, it will be fore your welfare./ When I, acting rightly, had paid honour with perfume and garlands, getting rid of my human body I arose in Nandana."[1075]

Norman believes that the *Vimānavatthu* was a relatively late addition to the canon, but he notes that it seems likely that the Sarvâstivādin Kṣudrakâgama contained a similar collection, and that some verses are in the relatively old *āryā* metre; for these reasons, he suggest that "the Vimānavatthu was subject to a long history of development" and that "there is . . . no reason to doubt that the style of story is old."[1076] For our current purposes, however, it is sufficient to note that even if these verses are relatively late, they still appear in the canon, and constitute further evidence that relics (*dhātu*) were regarded as important during the Pāli-canonical period.

Indeed, the evidence given by these *Vimānavatthu* stories go well beyond anything we could have concluded on the basis of the MPNS and SN passages cited above. They show that relics were supposed to be the direct objects of worship (*pūja*), and further that this worship was important because of its capacity to generate merit (*puñña*). We note further that the correct way to worship these relics is to make offerings to them, among which may be "perfume and garlands" (reminiscent of the rites offered by the Mallas in the first seven days after the

[1075] Horner, *Vimānavatthu* 121; *khīṇāyukañca maṃ ñatvā sarīraṃ pādāsi satthuno/ imaṃ sujāta pūjehi taṃ te atthāya hebhīti/ tāhaṃ gandhehi mālehi pūjayatvā samuyyuto/ pahāya mānusaṃ dehaṃ upapannomhi nandanaṃ.*

[1076] Norman, *Pāli Lit.* 70-71.

Buddha's cremation in MPNS, before the rival kings turn up to make their claim). Neither of these aspects of the relic cult were clear in our other material, but with this passage in hand, it is possible for us to conclude not just that relics were valued and enshrined in *stūpas,* but that the important outlines of the "relic cult" as we know it from later history were already in place.

This concludes our survey of all the canonical passages known to me in the Pāli materials bearing on relics and their cult. They are relatively few, a fact that in itself may be significant. But they suffice, as we have seen, to show that many of the most basic and important dimensions of the later standard ideas about relics were already present in the Pāli canonical period – but not yet that relics were regarded as bodies. We now turn to a second body of evidence for the early phases of the cult – archaeology and epigraphy.

4.1.2.3 Epigraphic and archaeological evidence in the Pāli-canonical period (to 100 B.C.E.)

As Gregory Schopen has devoted a significant portion of his large and frequently brilliant *oeuvre* to demonstrating, inscriptions and archaeological evidence are a rich source of information about relics in the early period (if not, as he would sometimes have it, the only source), and it would certainly be impossible to produce a rounded account of what can be known about relics in the Pāli canonical period without consideration of this evidence.

The most tantalising piece of potentially direct evidence of the relic cult in Aśokan times is surely the inconclusive single instance of the word *śarīra* in an Aśokan inscription, which has been interpreted to refer to relics. Much could hinge on whether or not this passage indeed refers to relics, and it is worth examining in some detail, if only to see in the end how frustratingly little it can tell us.

The words at issue, *aṃmaṃca*[?] *budhasa salīle āloḍhe,* are found in the Ahraurā version of Minor Rock Edict I. The problem of exactly what this sentence says, and therefore what we might or might not be able to conclude from it about a relic cult in the time of Aśoka, has been most exhaustively studied by K. R. Norman, in an article that is a philological and inferential *tour de force.*[1077] Norman's arguments are complex indeed, but it is possible to give a quick sketch of only the points that concern us here. Norman bases himself on a wide-ranging set of observations of the overall corpus of inscriptions that show (a) that edicts were accompanied by cover-letters that instructed officials and scribes as to what to do with them; (b) that scribes often made mistakes, or extemporised additions of their own to the edicts they inscribed; (c) that portions of the cover letters often made it into the text of the inscriptions that have come down to us on rock, even though they were not intended for that purpose. Upon this basis, he argues that the key sentence in the edict, which he points out is included in only this of seventeen extant versions of the edict,[1078] is based upon a combination of such factors.

Norman thus proposes that the cover letter accompanying the edict included a date, stating that the edict had been promulgated on the 256th day of a regnal year;[1079] the scribe at Ahraurā, however, like some other scribes, mistakenly included it in what he carved. Moreover, Norman suggests that in the cover letter received at Ahraurā, the number 236 was given redundantly in both words and numerals, and that this, and possible irregularities in the way the numerals were written, misled the scribe into thinking that they were letters of similar form – probably

[1077] "Notes on the Ahraurā Version of Aśoka's First Minor Rock Edict".

[1078] Norman, "Notes" 277.

[1079] Norman, "Notes" 280-281. Norman shows that this sentence was part of the cover letter by showing that some scribes at some sites omitted it.

the letters *aṃ maṃ ja*. Norman suggests that the scribe "corrected" *ja* to *ca,* without which the "word" he was looking at made no sense.[1080]

This much of Norman's argument, it seems to me, is as good as we can hope for from this difficult problem. He shows quite convincingly that the "cover letters" indeed existed, and that there were other cases where their content found its way onto the rock, even in the case of this same text, MRE I. It disposes of the problem (which may not be a problem at all) of determining the special "significance" of the number 256, which he shows has led to some true acrobatics of learning. It is also the only hypothesis that has been suggested, to my knowledge, that can explain the fact that the key sentence is found in only one version of a text that has come down to us in sixteen other parallels.

Norman then moves to more speculative realms, however. The scribe then had to find some way of making sense of the "word(s)" *amaṃca* in its context with the sentence saying "at a time two hundred and fifty-six days since . . ." Norman suggests that he added the words *budhasa salīle āloḍhe* in his attempt to do this. Norman examines various candidates for the meaning of the word *aṃmaṃca*, before concluding that it could only be read as *aṃ* ("and") *maṃca* "couch", so that the whole reads, "and the body of the Buddha [has/had] mounted the 'couch' (*maṃca*)."[1081] At the conclusion of this elaborate chain of reasoning, Norman suggests, by way of explaining why the scribe might have thought this was a plausible rendering of the word he thought he saw and a plausible context with which to make it meaningful:

> "It must be confessed that there seems to be no obvious reason why, faced with what seemed to be the word *maṃca,* the scribe decided to make up a sentence stating that 256 nights had passed since the body of the Buddha mounted it. There is a tradition

[1080] Norman, "Notes" 286.

[1081] Norman, "Notes" 287.

> that Aśoka re-interred the relics which had been shared out after the Buddha's death, and it is not impossible that the sentence refers to this in some way. As already noted, the Buddha attained *parinibbāna* upon a couch, referred to as a *mañcaka* in the Parinibbāna-sutta, and as a *parinibbāna-mañca* in the Mahāvaṃsa. The sentence might be a reference to a re-enactment of the *parinibbāna* happenings as part of the re-interment ceremony, whereby the body of the Buddha (not, of course, the actual body, but perhaps an effigy of it) was represented as mounting upon a couch."[1082]

Norman knows he is writing in a very speculative vein here, but nonetheless, it is important to note just how speculative is this context that Norman assumes for the scribe's conjectured intention. We know of no "effigies" or Buddha-images until centuries after this time. The only evidence we have for Aśoka's reinterment of the relics is from the much later tradition of the *Asokâvadāna.* Further, if the reference here is indeed to such a "re-enactment" as Norman imagines, it is difficult to understand why the scribe would have written of *the body* of the (yet living) Buddha mounting the couch to die, instead of simply saying that "the Buddha" mounted his couch.

One of the key links in Norman's argument for this reading of the text is the contention, made early on in his article, that Skt. *śarīra* in the singular "means 'body', not 'relics', which is its meaning in the plural". However, as Jonathan Silk has already observed in a brief note,[1083] and as can be seen from a quick look over many of the earliest inscriptions that mention relics (see below), this is certainly not necessarily so from quite early on in the record – at least as early as the late first century. Earlier than that, it seems to me, we simply do not have very much evidence to go on. Certainly, as Schopen has argued, the distinction between singular and plural seems clear in the *Mahāparinibbāna-sutta,* but we also saw that among the scanty remaining textual evidence we have for the canonical period as a whole, *Vimānavatthu* 5.13 speaks of singular "a relic" (*sarīraṃ*), as does *Vimānavatthu* 7.8 (*dhātuṃ*). On the basis of this

[1082] Norman, "Notes" 287-288.

[1083] Silk, *Body Language* 89-90.

scanty evidence, it certainly does not seem inconceivable that the Ahraurā scribe, even if we follow Norman's conjuctures as to how the sentence came to be in the text in the first place (the cover letter, the misreading, the compensatory insertion of *budhasa salīle āloḍhe*), was thinking of a singular *relic* of the Buddha, and not his whole dead or living body.

In fact, if we were to speculate for the purposes of argument in the opposite direction to Norman, and try to read the inscription in terms as consonant as possible with what we know about relics from elsewhere, rather than trying to distance this instance of **sarīra* from relics as much as possible, we might come up with an explanation which is in some respects more plausible. We have already noted above that a traditions are known, admittedly much later, in which episodes in the "lives" of relics themselves are modelled after the *parinirvāṇa*: their final disappearance in the endtimes, but also, more tellingly, their enshrinement at Anuruddha.[1084] It is also arguable, as we saw above, that relics have been very broadly conceived of in the tradition as "alive", and therefore as agents capable of volitional action – which makes it perfectly possible for a relic (even more than a "body") to be the subject of an intransitive verb of volitional motion like *āloḍha* = Skt. *ā/rudh* "to mount". (Indeed, it might be an honorific way of speaking of relics to say that they "mount" rather that to say that they are "put up" somewhere, that is, that they are manhandled like mere inert things!) Such a reading would arguably make more sense of this perplexing passage than Norman's suggestion, and requires us to only imagine with the grain of otherwise known historical practice and thought about *śarīra,* not against it. At the very least, it certainly has the virtue of showing us that readings other than Norman's are possible, and consistent with the more evidentially grounded parts of his argument about the way the phrase at issue found its way into the inscription.

[1084] See above. p. 479.

Whatever may have been the inscrutable historical facts behind this opaque Aśokan inscription, however, Norman's argument certainly has the virtue of showing just how difficult it is to extract any information from it and just how speculative we must be in order to make much sense of it at all. For our current purposes, it is certainly safer merely to note that nothing in the language that is used here makes it sure that it does indeed contain a reference to any recognisable form of the relic cult, but that equally, its reference to the *śarīra* of the Buddha *may* represent a faint echo of some such practice in Aśokan times.

Gregory Schopen has made much of a seemingly somewhat clearer reference to relics in the early inscriptional record, in the Bajaur Reliquary Inscription. Were it genuine, this inscription would fall in the Pāli-canonical period under discussion here, because another of the inscriptions borne by the same object mentions the name of Menander, and it should therefore date to the second century B.C.E. (Menander ruled over Bactria 163-150 B.C.E.). However, Harry Falk has recently argued quite persuasively on several grounds that the portions of the inscription that mention relics are fake.[1085] I therefore mention it here not to adduce it as evidence for the early relic cult, let alone the any specifics about the understanding of relics in this early period, but because Schopen's use of it has been quite broadly influential, and any account of early conceptions of the relics must therefore consider how Falk's findings change the picture.

First, to summarise the contents of the inscriptions at stake, the reliquary concerned bears multiple inscriptions, some of which are considered genuine even by Falk, who is sceptical

[1085] Falk, "Introduction of Stūpa-Worship".

about others. The inscriptions relevant to relics, of which there are two (among other inscriptions of later date than these) read respectively:[1086]

> *menedrasa*[1087] *maharajasa kaṭiasa divasa 4411/4 praṇasameda*
> " . . . of the Maharaja Menandros, the 14th day of the month Kārttika, endowed with life . . ."
>
> *praṇasameda* [*. . . . to*[1088]] *śakamunisa*
> " . . . of Śākyamuni, endowed with life . . ."

Each of the inscriptions contains odd gaps (as we will see, these gaps are key to Falk's arguments that they are not genuine), and scholars prior to Falk, who considered them genuine, have generally agreed in following Majumdar in "reconstructing" missing portions so that these inscriptions read respectively:[1089]

> *menendrasya mahārājasya* [*māsasya*] *devase 15 prāṇasametaṃ* [*śarīraṃ*] [*bhagavataḥ śākyamuneḥ*] [*pratiṣṭhāpitam*][1090] *. . .*
> " . . . [on] the 14th day of the month Kārttika of [the reign of] the great king Menander, [the relic] [of the Blessed One Śākyamuni] endowed with life [was established . . ."[1091]
>
> *prāṇasametaṃ* [*śarīraṃ bhagavataḥ*][1092] *śākyamuneḥ.*
> "[A relic,] endowed with life, of [the Blessed One] Śākyamuni."

The most important feature of these inscriptions is the epithet, found in both, that apparently ascribes "breath" (life) to the relics of the Buddha (*prāṇasametaṃ*). [1093]

[1086] I cite from Konow, "Note on the Bajaur Inscription"; translations also follow Konow.

[1087] Fussman transcribes *minedrasa,* "L'Indo-grec Ménandre" 101.

[1088] Konow discusses this faint letter but does not include it in his inscription; Fussman includes it, 101.

[1089] In Sircar's Sanskritised versions, as cited by Schopen, "Burial *ad Sanctos*" 126.

[1090] Schopen does not place *pratiṣṭhāpitam* in brackets, but the word is not included in Konow's version of the transcription; Konow, "A Note" 53.

[1091] Translation based upon Schopen, "Burial *ad Sanctos*" 126, who, however, does not indicate in his English translation which parts are reconstructed.

[1092] Schopen does not indicate that either of these words is reconstructed, but the extended discussion in Konow of Majumdar's "ingenious explanation" makes it clear that they both are; Konow 53-54.

[1093] This word is on both the outside of the casket, and repeated inside the reliquary lid. The full reconstructed internal inscription should have read, "[This is] a relic of the Blessed One Śākyamuni

Schopen has treated this pair of inscriptions on the same object as the "earliest actually attestable conception that we have" of relics,[1094] and he has cited it repeatedly as a key part of his argument that relics are alive. Indeed, it is arguably (with the possible exception of the less open-and-shut argument that the term *paribhāvita* refers to the infusion of living creatures with life) the only direct evidence that he ever cites, to my knowledge, that the operative category in the conception of relics is *life,* specifically, rather than a broader category like presence. It certainly seems like a clincher: if relics have *prāṇa,* in an Indic context, it is difficult to argue that they are conceived of as anything but alive, and this perhaps explains the fact that Schopen has relied upon this single piece of evidence so heavily in making his argument.

Even if we admit that he did not have the benefit of Falk's arguments when he wrote, we might think that Schopen made a little too much of this single piece of evidence. To my knowledge, he nowhere mentions how unusual this formulation is, even if it is genuine; indeed, he rather seems to downplay the exceptional nature of this way of talking about relics.[1095] In fact, however, it is the *only* inscription that contains this notion, and the only place that it is attested

which is endowed with life" (*prāṇasametaṃ śarīraṃ bhagavataḥa śākyamuneḥ*). See Schopen, "Burial *ad Sanctos*" 126.

[1094] Schopen, "Burial *ad Sanctos*" 126. Typically, what Schopen means here by "earliest actually attestable" is "earliest dated reference in the epigraphic or material record", disregarding the evidence of texts as, by his lights, not reliably datable.

[1095] In "*Stūpa* and *Tīrtha*", he speaks of plural "inscription<u>s</u> where 'relics' of the Buddha are described, in Lamotte's phrase, as 'a living being endowed with breath';" 363, referring in fn. to Lamotte on this inscription alone; in the footnote to this sentence, he also refers to his own "On the Buddha and his Bones", in which, however, so far as I can see, he does not even cite the present inscription (as he certainly does elsewhere), let alone any additional inscription that might justify the plural. See also "Bones of a Buddha", 77-78, where he speaks immediately of this as "an expression that *was already current* in the first or second century B.C.E. outside of texts" (my emphasis), which to me, at least, the first time I read it, seemed to imply that the current inscription was but an instance of a more general phenomenon, and not a *hapax* and possible unique locution. See also "Burial *ad Sanctos*" 126.

anywhere.[1096] Another fact to which Schopen has not draw particular attention[1097] is the significant parts of the inscription that have been reconstructed, including the very mention of a relic itself.[1098]

Falk argues that the parts of the inscription Schopen cites so heavily to prove that relics "have [life-]breath" are fake on the following grounds:[1099]

> (1) The only two words of the inscription on the upper side of the lid (cited second above) are spaced away from one another, where such spacing is extremely rare in Kharoṣṭhī inscriptions; the two words, being so spaced, just happen each to sit in the middle of a single fragment each of what remains of the lid, with break separating the fragments running exactly through the unusual space between the two words. This is more consistent with the inscription having been added after the lid was broken; it would be a remarkable coincidence if a break after the inscribing of the lid just happened to run in this manner through an otherwise inexplicable gap.
>
> (2) The text of the inscription on the lower side of the lid similarly follows the break.

[1096] Konow, "Note on the Bajaur Inscription" 54; Falk 351.

[1097] Schopen merely says, in a footnote, "It should be noted that this inscription is very fragmentary", 144 n. 50.

[1098] Konow, "Note on the Bajaur Inscription" 53-54, following Majumdar.

[1099] Falk, "Introduction of Stūpa-Worship" 350-352.

(3) Precisely the word *prāṇa* is otherwise unknown from Buddhist inscriptions of the time in the sense in which it is used here, but can be explained by a forger projecting the terms of "late Vedic and Vedāntic philosophy" into a supposedly Buddhist context.

(4) Other terminological anomalies.

(5) Anomalies in the shapes of letters.

I confess that I find these arguments quite convincing. In any case, whether or not Falk's arguments are ultimately accepted by scholars (unlike myself) who are knowledgeable enough to evaluate his arguments on their own ground, it is safer, for the purposes of the present analysis, to exclude the evidence of the Bajaur Inscription for another reasons: even if the inscription is still genuine, the unusual nature of the language it uses about relics makes it impossible to be sure how widespread the conception found in it was at any period, let alone this early. It would therefore be a violation of my basic methodological rule of thumb here not to make too much of single anomalous pieces of evidence to argue, on the basis of one piece of fragmentary evidence comprising only a few words, that any conception of the relics was centuries earlier than it otherwise would appear.

I have already had occasion to note above that with this key piece of evidence for Schopen's thesis that relics were understood to be alive undermined by Falk's arguments, Schopen's evidence for his claim that this is the best way to understand relics is rendered much more equivocal as a whole. It is my contention here, against Schopen, that it is more accurate and useful to understand much of the same evidence as part of a larger pattern whereby relics are understood as bodies of the Buddha. I will have occasion to return to this point again below.

Quite extreme claims have also been made at various times on behalf of the famous "Piprāhwā Vase", which was discovered in 1898 and has been discussed excitedly in the century since, and related finds.[1100] Bühler, for example, went so far (though without much evidence to back him up) as to state his confidence that the inscription on the vase itself was pre-Aśokan, and that it was therefore the oldest written document known from all of India.[1101] In the 1970s new excavation of the site was undertaken by Srivastava, who discovered the remnants of an even earlier *stūpa* beneath the *stūpa* visible today, below which in turn he found "two burnt brick chambers" each containing another soapstone casket. These caskets contained "charred bones", and had beside it a dish which "might have contained ash".[1102] Srivastava dated these relic caskets to the "fifth-fourth centuries B.C." on the basis of the copresence of Northern Black Polished Ware, and claimed "it is certain that the fresh relics are of Buddha."[1103] This exciting suggestion has been taken up and repeated by many authors, and can be seen in far-flung corners of the secondary literature.

If Srivastava's dates were accurate, this would mean that we have archaeological evidence of a relic cult as far back as the fourth century B.C.E., regardless of what the inscription on the vase (discovered earlier at a higher level of the site) might tell us. However, Herbert Härtel takes a much more cautious view of the dates we can ascribe to these objects. Based upon the style and size of the bricks used to construct the respective chambers within which the caskets were found, he argues that the chamber containing the inscribed "vase" is of the first century B.C.E.,

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[1100] See Härtel, "Archaeological Research" 74, for a list of important contributions to this discussion.

[1101] Härtel, "Archaeological Research 75.

[1102] Srivastava, "Piprahwa" 107-108.

[1103] Srivastava, "Piprahwa" 108.

and the lower chamber of the latter half of the second century B.C.E.[1104] He also notes similarities to other reliquaries dating to the second and first centuries B.C.E.; cites Dani arguing that the manner of the writing is similarly later; that vessels of the type upon which the inscription is found were made in the second century B.C.E. at the earliest;[1105] and, in other connections, notes that burnt bricks are not older than the second century B.C.E. in North India;[1106] and that Northern Polished Black wares are known in sites from dates considerably later than Srivastava says.[1107] For these various reasons, it seems more cautious on the whole to follow Härtel in his conservative later dating. Nonetheless, we should also perhaps note that it remains possible that the "vase" and inscription itself could date from the second century, even if the chamber in which it was found is slightly later, as Härtel himself seems to recognise.[1108] For these reasons, it is just possible the vase falls within the horizon of the period I am here calling "Pāli-canonical", and for that reason I have chosen to treat it in this section, rather than the following one treating slightly later materials, while recognising that it may nonetheless be slightly later.

The interpretation of the inscription itself seems to have been the focus of some controversy (despite being called "très simple" by la Vallée Poussin[1109]), which has pivoted primarily on the question of whether it says that the relics are of Śākyamuni, or of a group of other people from

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[1104] Härtel, "Archaeological Research" 78.

[1105] Härtel, "Archaeological Research" 75.

[1106] Härtel, "Archaeological Research" 72.

[1107] Härtel 61 and n. 2 (where he gives a lower horizon of 300 BCE among the most conservative group of scholars and then says that "the majority prefers lower dates"), 70, 73, etc.

[1108] "The earlier half of the second century B.C. . . . . is the earliest date possible at all for the Piprāhwā Vase;" Härtel 75.

[1109] La Vallée Poussin, *L'Inde* 144.

the Śākya clan.[1110] It seems agreed in recent scholarship, however, that it states that the vase contains (a) relic(s)[1111] of the Buddha Śākyamuni, who is so identified by saying that he is of the Śākya clan (*budhasa bhagavate Sakiyanaṃ*).[1112]

Stūpas may also furnish some indirect evidence supporting the likely existence of a relic cult in the Pāli-canonical period, though we have already noted above the possible dangers of assuming that all *stūpa*-like monuments have a reliquary function and therefore attest to the relic cult, and the possibility that a *caitya* cult of memorial monuments might possibly have separate origins. Nonetheless, given the mortuary functions served by tumuli worldwide, the known history of megalithicism in India itself, the fact that *stūpas* are already associated with relics in the textual evidence of the *Mahāparinibbāna-sutta* and the *Vimānavatthu,* and the consistent later reliquary function of many *stūpas,* it seems that we can cautiously accept that the presence of *stūpa*-like monuments bespeaks cultic activity around relics.

A single Aśokan inscription seems to establish beyond doubt that there was some cult of *stūpas* to former Buddhas in the time of Aśoka: the "Nigālī Sagar Pillar" inscription, which records the fact that Aśoka "enlarged the *stūpa* of the Buddha Konākamana to double (its original size)" (*budhasa konākamanasa thube dutiyaṃ vaḍhite*).[1113] Thus, we know that in the third century B.C.E., monuments called *stūpa* were already in existence and were maintained. We should note, however, that the evidence of this inscription only entitles us to conclude that there was a

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1110 Srivastava summarises prior readings, 102-105.

1111 The word *salila* is in compound in this inscription, and so its grammatical number cannot be determined.

1112 Srivastava 102.

1113 Hultzsch, *Corpus* 165. The translation is his.

stūpa cult to the former Buddhas, and, reconstructed speculative chronologies of doctrinal development that assume the historical priority of Śākyamuni as a "real man" aside, we cannot be sure that this cult was extended to Śākyamuni at this early date. We should also note that the inscription does not directly mention relics, and so we have no way of being sure that the *stūpa* it mentions was understood to serve a reliquary function.[1114]

According to the admirably scrupulous Härtel, for example, various parts of the site of Sārnāth (remembering, of course, that Sārnāth is primarily sacred as one of the "four sites" of pilgrimage, that is, the site of the first sermon), including the *dharmarājika* (*stūpa*), are considered to date back to the Aśokan period.[1115] Similarly, Härtel suggests that the "unpretentious low mound" among the remains at Vaiśālī may be very old, and indeed, that "the initial construction of the *stūpa* may well antedate even the Mauryan period.[1116] Despite the fact that Vaiśalī, like Sārnāth, is famous as a pilgrimage site, it is also considered possible by researchers that this, like Piprāhwā, might have been the site of the interment of one of the original portions of the Buddha's relics before Aśoka redistributed them,[1117] so that the site may not necessarily only be linked to the pilgrimage cult if that cult is separate from that of relics.

In assessing these various pieces of non-textual evidence for the earliest phase of the relic cult (or its antecedents) in India, we must bear in mind that if it is difficult to find clear evidence of

[1114] It was not, of course, unknown that *stūpas* even to former Buddhas were understood to serve reliquary functions, at least in later times.

[1115] Härtel 65.

[1116] Härtel 68-69.

[1117] Härtel quotes with apparent approval the excavation report of Sinha and Roy, which states that "the *stūpa* was in the past disturbed by a trench, leaving but one relic casket of soapstone containing ashy earth" etc.; "the ancient breach is the reason why the *stūpa* has been held as the one erected by the Licchavis and later on being opened under Aśoka to reach the relics for redistribution;" 68.

anything prior to Aśoka in the material and epigraphic record, it is equally difficult to find such material or epigraphic evidence for *anything* at such early dates. Kevin Trainor points this out when he says, "If the precise dates of the earliest Indian *stūpa* constructions remain contested, it is nevertheless clear that the earliest material evidence of the Buddhist tradition is . . . linked with the cult of relic veneration . . ."[1118] In the overall context of the material record we have, then, evidence of the cult of relics is very early, and, especially if we extend our purview to include the cult of the *stūpa* (which, despite the possibility of a separate *caitya* cult, we have no reason to believe is any older than relics or at any point in its history entirely divorced from relics), very prominent among the earliest material evidence we have.

Nonetheless, it is certainly true that we have quite a meagre few pieces of concrete and direct evidence of the relic cult in the Pāli-canonical period proper, and very little in the inscriptions, in particular, that will allow us to put any flesh on the bare bones of its brute existence and develop any understanding of its precise content.

4.1.2.4 Summary: Insufficient evidence that relics were regarded as bodies in the Pāli-canonical period

In conclusion, the overall evidence, both textual and material, is too widespread and consistent for us to deny that there was certainly a cult of relics in the Pāli-canonical period although the evidence for that cult is in places tantalisingly fragmentary and difficult of interpretation.

[1118] Trainor 45. I would qualify this statement by saying that *some of* the earliest evidence is possibly linked to the cult. Trainor actually says that this evidence is "*directly* linked with the cult of relic veneration", but he bases this assessment in part on an unfounded assumption that *stūpas* are "direct" evidence of the relic cult; I have criticised this aspect of his argument above, n. 940. When we subtract *stūpas* from the overall range of evidence he adduces (all of which we have also considered here), follow Härtel to bracket the more optimistic claims for the Piprāhwā vase, and recognise the extremely speculative nature of any claims about the supposed "Licchavi *stūpa*" at Vaiśālī, there is nothing left that provides strong evidence of relics themselves at such an early date.

However, we have also seen that once we exclude from consideration the Bajaur Inscription, the evidence of which has been impeached by Falk's recent strong arguments that the relevant portions of the inscription are fake, there is nothing in this early evidence to support the conclusion that relics were already regarded as bodies at this time, except for the fact that they were called *sarīrāni.* (By the same token, there is also obviously no evidence to think they were understood to be "alive", and we have already seen that, without this key *sui generis* contention that they have life-breath, Schopen's case that they are so regarded is far less clear-cut, and we can make at least as much sense of the evidence – in later periods – by interpreting it to mean that relics are bodies.) Indeed, a full survey of all this evidence makes it strikingly clear just how anomalous the Bajaur Inscription is among the materials we have testifying to the relic cult in this period, and should perhaps in that measure make us all the more suspicious of it.

I contend that this picture changes markedly, however, when we turn our attention to material evidence, especially in the epigraphic record, from a slightly later period. There, in a number of Kharoṣṭhī inscriptions, mostly on reliquaries, from around the turn of the Common Era, we see what I consider clear evidence that the conception of relics as bodies of the Buddha has clearly become current. This material, while later than the Pāli-canonical material, still dates to a period that is likely to be earlier than anything else we find in the non-Pāli-canonical textual record. Thus, I will argue, we see in these Kharoṣṭhī materials not only the inception of the understanding of relics as bodies, but the first dim beginnings of the notion that the Buddha can indeed have an appropriate special embodiment.

4.1.2.5 The emergence of the understanding of relics as veritable bodies of the Buddha in inscriptional evidence c100 B.C.E. to 50 C.E., especially in the Senavarma Inscription

The inscriptions we will survey in this section are in Kharoṣṭhī script, and fall in the first century B.C.E. and the first few decades of the common era. The quirks of our textual record have determined that this period, from the point of view of ideas even approximately datable from the textual evidence, is otherwise something of an evidential "black box". It is too late for the contents of the Pāli canon to be relevant; but, on the whole, too far before the horizon of first translations into Chinese (around the middle of the second century C.E.), much of the Pāli paracanonical and postcanonical literature, and even the earliest Central Asian manuscripts to be of much help. This means that these inscriptions are the earliest datable evidence for doctrines of the Buddha's bodies we have for the post-Pāli-canonical period, and indeed, I will argue, that they are the best candidates we have for the first material embodying a clear conception of a positive and veritable embodiment of the Buddha *per se*.

We have more plentiful evidence for this period than we do for the Pāli-canonical period proper, and so in the following I have confined myself to a representative sample of inscriptions, mostly from reliquaries, that directly mention relics, while taking it as understood that the cult of relics as such continued as we have already established it had begun in the Pāli-canonical period proper. I have not, in other words, continued to consider archaeological evidence not accompanied by inscriptions, even reliquaries, and I have in particular not considered the indirect evidence that might be furnished by the existence of *stūpas* from this later period.

First, we can note that there are a significant number of Kharoṣṭhī Inscriptions that provide evidence of a continued and even intensified cult of the relics in this period.

Thus, Gérard Fussman has studied a "Reliquaire de l'an (26?)", which he dates with slight hesitation to 32 B.C.E., which speaks clearly of the "establishment of relics" in accordance with the familiar formula.[1119] Sadakata Akira has studied an "Inscription de Prahodi de l'an 32", dating to 26 B.C.E., which speaks similarly of the establishment of relics.[1120] The "Taxila copper-plate inscription of Patika" records the "establishment of a relic in a previously unestablished place",[1121] and is said by Konow to date to 6 B.C.E.[1122] The "Swāt Relic Vase Inscription of the Meridarkh Theodoros" dates to sometime in the first century B.C.E., and speaks of establishing a relic of Śākyamuni (*ime śarira śaka-muṇisa bhagravato*).[1123] A reliquary from the time of Viṣṇuvarma studied by Richard Salomon is undated, but the mention of the prince Viṣṇuvarma dates it to the time of other Apraca inscriptions, and Salomon suggest it dates to "the end of the 1st century BC, or at the very latest from the first few years of the first century AD".[1124] The "Indravarman" reliquary, also studied by Salomon, contains among its inscriptions two mentions of relics (*śarira*), and in both places the inscription explicitly mentions that the relics are established in a *stūpa* to the "honour" of various (secular) individuals.[1125] This object, Salomon says, probably dates from 10-0 B.C.E., a conclusion he arrives at on the basis of the fact that another inscription from the same person, Indravarman (see immediately below), is dated

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[1119] Fussman, "Nouvelles inscriptions Śaka (IV)", 48.

[1120] Sadakata, "Inscriptions Kharoṣṭhī" 302-303.

[1121] Konow, *Corpus* 28-29. Konow's reading of the key formula is corrected in Salomon and Schopen

[1122] Konow, *Corpus* 28.

[1123] Roth, "Physical Presence" 301, citing D. C. Sircar, *Select Inscriptions Bearing on Indian History and Civilization,* vol. I (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1965), 111.

[1124] Salomon, "Prince Viṣṇuvarma" 30. See also Fussman, "Nouvelles inscriptions Śaka", 2-4.

[1125] Salomon, "Inscribed Silver Buddhist Reliquary" 424, 428, 429.

to 6 C.E., and various considerations that argue that this object must be slightly earlier.[1126] A "Gold Scroll Inscription" studied by Salomon which mentions *śarira* is dated by Salomon to around the turn of the Common Era on the basis of similarities to the reliquary inscription of the Apraca princess Uttarā.[1127] The Uttarā inscription itself, though it does not directly mention relics but only the establishment of a *stūpa,* is engraved on a reliquary lid.[1128] Similarly, the "Dédicace de Traṣaka" studied by Fussman, dating to just before the turn of the Common Era, speaks clearly of the establishment of relics.[1129]

The aforementioned mentioned casket of Indravarman, dating to 6 C.E.,[1130] has been studied by a line of luminaries, but most definitively by Salomon and Schopen, who demonstrated important parallels to formulae found in the inscription and passages in canonical literature.[1131] It, too, records the "establishment" of a relic, in this case specifically of the "Lord Śākyamuni" (*bhagavato śakyamiṇisa śarira*), and speaks further of the production of *brahma*-merit (*brammapuñ[o]*) as a result.[1132]

[1126] Salomon, "Inscribed Silver Buddhist Reliquary" 419, 439-443.

[1127] Salomon, "Five Kharoṣṭhī Inscriptions" 238. The first inscription studied by Salomon in this article also mentions *śarira*, but he gives no explicit date for it; he notes grounds upon which it, too, is similar to those of Uttarā; 234-235.

[1128] Salomon, "Reliquary Inscription of Utara" 169. Salomon discusses the difficulties in determining an exact date, but on the basis of complex considerations places it after 5-6 CE and as late as the 20s CE; 173.

[1129] Fussman, "Nouvelles inscriptions Śaka (III)", 37 (mention of relics), 38 (date).

[1130] Salomon and Schopen, "Indravarman (Avaca) Inscription Reconsidered", 123 n. 19.

[1131] Salomon and Schopen, "Indravarman (Avaca) Inscription Reconsidered". Salomon and Schopen suggest that this may make it "the earliest certain example of a direct contact between Buddhist canonical literature and Buddhist inscriptions"; 120.

[1132] Salomon and Schopen, "Indravarman (Avaca) Inscription Reconsidered", 108.

The "Bhagamoya Relic Bowl Inscription", which dates to 19-20 C.E., speaks of the establishment of "relics of Lord Śākyamuni" after the usual formulae, and lists people "honoured" by the act.[1133] The "reliquary of Bhagamoya", studied by Fussman, specifically identifies the relics of which it speaks as of "the Lord Śākyamuni"; this object dates to 20 C.E.[1134] The "Bīmarān Vase Inscription[s]", of which Konow says he sees no "objection to assigning it to the time of Azes",[1135] records in two places a gift which Konow interprets as given "to the relics of the Lord" (*śarirehi*);[1136] the inscriptions were found with a "gold casket decorated [? *sic*] with relics". Konow's date would place this object sometime between 57 B.C.E. and 40 C.E. The "Śatrea reliquary",[1137] studied by Fussman, is dated by him on paleographic grounds only to sometime between 50 B.C.E. and 50 C.E.; it expresses the wish that "Yara's wife might become pregnant by this relic".[1138]

[1133] Salomon, "Bhagamoya Relic Bowl Inscription" 107, 108.

[1134] Fussman, "Nouvelles Inscriptions" 35.

[1135] Konow, *Corpus* 50.

[1136] Konow mentions the alternative interpretation of Pargiter in the instrumental plural, "with relics of the Lord", which would mean that the donor also gave the relics. Konow says as part of his interpretation of the word *śarirehi* as a dative, which he interprets in combination with the word *nir/yat* as "to restore", that he thinks "the case may have been similar to what is recorded in the Patika plate, where we hear about relics which had not been properly deposited (*apratiṭhavita*) and were subsequently enshrined"; 52. This is clearly based upon a misreading of the formulaic (Skt. equivalent) *apratiṣṭha,* which Schopen and Salomon have brilliantly shown in this and a number of parallel cases to clearly mean "[in a place where relics were] not established [previously]"; see Salomon and Schopen, "Indravarman (Avaca) Casket Inscription Reconsidered", esp. 115-118. Nonetheless, Konow's interpretation of the word as a dative may still hold, in which case the relics could have been present earlier than the inscription. Given the copresence of the reliquary and the inscribed vase in the same find, however, we are safer to avoid such speculation and assign the reliquary a conservative date the same as the inscription itself.

[1137] Fussman, "Deux Dédicaces" 30.

[1138] Other Kharoṣṭhī inscriptions that mention relics are too late to concern us here, but provide evidence that the cult continued. Thus the "Reliquary Lid Inscription of Khadadata" and the "Model *Stūpa* Reliquary Inscription of Utaraya", both dated by Salomon to approx. 100 CE, Salomon, "Three Dated Kharoṣṭhī Inscription"; Majumdar's "Inscription of the Year 303 on Relic-Casket I", which he dates to 245, "Inscriptions on Two Relic-Caskets". See also these inscriptions published in Konow's volume of *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*: the "Warak Vase Inscription", 179 CE, Konow 165-170; the "Box-Lid Inscription of the Year 18", 146 CE, 151-152; the "Kurram Casket Inscription", 148 CE, 152-155;, Others are of uncertain

There is thus plentiful inscription evidence that lavish worship of the relics of the Buddha was current in the period around the turn of the Common Era. I will leave the treatment of three more inscriptions, which are of special significance for our analysis of the development of Buddha-body doctrine, to relevant places in the discussion of a fourth, the Senavarma Inscription, below.

The inscription of Senavarma,[1139] the longest inscription we have in the Kharoṣṭhī script, is in my opinion certainly the most important inscription dating to this period for the study of relics and conceptions thereof, and a very important piece of evidence in helping us to trace the development of ideas about the Buddha's embodiments in general. According to Salomon, this inscription dates to the first half of the first century C.E., that is, towards the latter end of the range covered by the inscriptions we consider here.[1140] This inscription provides exciting and rich evidence about very early stages in the development not just of ideas about relics but a number of ideas that are arguably key to the development of the bodies of the Buddha more generally, and we will examine it here in detail.

We have already had occasion to mention above[1141] the fact that in some inscriptions of this period, we find a formulaic description of the relics of the Buddha as "quickened with" (*paribhāvita*) five "pure aggregates". As I mentioned briefly there, while deferring full

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date: the "Mathurā Elephant Inscription", 49-50; the "Hidda Inscription", which Konow does not date, 157-158.

[1139] On this important inscription, see most seminally Fussman, "Inscription de Senavarma"; Salomon, "Inscription of Senavarma"; von Hinüber, *Beiträge;* also reviews of von Hinüber by Salomon, Fussman and Falk.

[1140] Salomon, "Inscription of Senavarma" 261.

[1141] See above p. 465.

discussion to this and later sections of this dissertation, the ascription of these five aggregates to relics is one of the most important pieces of evidence available that they were regarded as veritable bodies of the Buddha, because we also find the same set of concepts featuring in ideas about embodiments of the Buddha in early Prajñāpāramitā and Sarvâstivāda texts, as we will see later in this chapter. The Senavarma Inscription is of interest, then, first, because it is one of the earliest inscriptional witnesses to the ascription of these pure aggregates to the relics, and I will therefore begin my analysis of the inscription by considering this aspect of it.

The relevant portion of the Senavarma Inscription is fortunately one of the most straightforward parts of the inscription in its interpretation, precisely due to its use of the formula, to which parallels have been identified by previous scholars. The inscription reads, at lines 7a-7b: "[this/these relic/s,] quickened (*paribhāvita*) with virtue, quickened with concentration, wisdom, release, knowledge and insight . . ."[1142]

The five aggregates, or a recognisable subset thereof, are also ascribed to relics in at least two other inscriptions of approximately the same era, so that I am not reliant upon the Senavarma Inscription alone for this component of my claim that relics are regarded as veritable Buddha-bodies this early. The "Kopśakasa Reliquary", also studied by Fussman, speaks overtly of Śākyamuni's relics, and describes the relics as "suffused" with or quickened by (*paribhavida,* Skt *paribhāvita*) *śīla, samādhi* and *prajñā* (which are among the later standard five *anāsravaskandha*). This object dates to 26 C.E.[1143] Sadakata Akira has also studied an "Inscription de l'an 98 d'Azès",

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[1142] *śila(pari)bhavita/ samasiprañavimutkiñaṇadra(śa)paribhavita.* Von Hinüber suggests the Skt. equivalent *śīlaparibhāvitāḥ samādhiprajñāvimuktijñānadarśa*[*na*]*paribhāvitā.* For a fuller citation of the context to this portion of the inscription, see below.

[1143] Fussman, "Nouvelles Inscriptions" 39.

dating to 40 C.E., which is of special interest because it evidences once again the formula that speaks of the relics as "quickened" or "suffused" with (some of) the *anāsravaskandha*.[1144]

In order to understand the full significance of this claim that the five aggregates "quicken" or "suffuse" relics, we must look in two directions: back into the Pāli-canonical antecedents for this notion, where they arguably already have associations with notions of embodiment; and forward, into other early post-Pāli-canonical ideas about embodiments of the Buddha. Both of these exercises will necessitate a small digression in their turn. To look back, we must briefly introduce new Pāli-canonical material. Looking forwards will necessarily require that I anticipate my own argument somewhat.

Looking back, first, to the Pāli-canonical precedents for the pure aggregates, it is clear that the five aggregates rubric comprises a hitherto unnoticed link back to some of the oldest embodiment doctrines we have had occasion to examine in this dissertation – the rejection of ordinary given embodiment, the elaboration of a *manomayakāya* as a vehicle to the acquisition of liberatory powers and insight, and indeed, the acquisition of the ultimate liberating gnosis itself.

First, we should note that some of the less consequential Pāli-canonical precedents for this rubric have been usefully collected by Ronald Davidson[1145] and la Vallée Poussin.[1146] According

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[1144] Sadakata 309, 311. *śila-paribhavi samasi-paribhavita vimuti-paribhavitao vimuti-paribhavito tasa bhagavato dhatu,* "relics of the Bhagavan suffused with morality, suffused with concentration, suffused with liberation, suffused with liberation" (*sic*).

[1145] Davidson, *Buddhist Systems of Transformation* 388-390. It does not matter for our purposes that these passages are perhaps, as Davidson thinks generally, "late"; their mere inclusion in the canon (and so broadly) should make them earlier than all our inscriptional evidence, at least assuming the general view of dating and the age of the canon with which I am working in this dissertation. Davidson makes a speculative connection between the *vimuktiskandha* in particular and the *vimuktikāya* of esp. SdhN; see 391-392.

to these passages, these five aggregates are what is "to be learnt".[1147] They characterise persons who need learn no more (i.e. are *aśaikṣa*) and are qualified to teach postulants and perform a range of other responsibilities in the monastic community.[1148] They characterise a person who has gone forth from the household life into the homeless state, and make such a person one to whom gifts given will reap great merit. Even seeing monks possessed of these five aggregates is "of great service" (*bahūpakāraṃ*), as is "hearing about" them, "approaching" them, "sitting round paying them homage", "recollecting" them, and "going forth in imitation" of them.[1149] By these relations to monks possessed of the five aggregates, it is possible to bring the five aggregates into completion in oneself.[1150]

[1146] VP AKBh IV, 297 n. 2, referring to DN, Iti, *Dharmasaṃgraha, Mahāvyutpatti,* etc.

[1147] DN 34, *Dasuttara-sutta*, Walshe 515, "Which five things are to be realised?" etc.; *katame pañca dhammā sacchikātabbā? pañca dhammakkhandhā: sīlakkhandho, samādhikkhandho, paññākkhandho, vimuttikkhandho, vimuttiñāṇadassanakkhandho. ime pañca dhammā sacchikātabbā.* Also listed at DN 33, *Sangīti-sutta,* 1.11.25, Walshe 492, with the exception of *vimuttiñāṇadassana*.

[1148] Horner, *Book of the Discipline* IV, 81: "Monks, if a monk is possessed of five qualities he should not ordain, he should not give guidance, a novice should not attend him: if he is not possessed of an adepts body of moral habit; if he is not possessed of an adepts body of concentration . . . body of wisdom . . . body of freedom . . . body of vision and knowledge of freedom;" *na asekhena sīlakkhandhena samannāgato hoti, na asekhena samādhikkhandhena samannāgato hoti, na asekhena paññākkhandhena samannāgato hoti, na asekhena vimuttikkhandhena samannāgato hoti, na asekhena vimuttiñāṇadassanakkhandhena samannāgato hoti.* The text goes on to say that if a monk does have these qualities, he may ordain; that he should only ordain if he possesses these qualities himself and encourages them in others; that such a monk is fit to be attended upon by a novice; 81-82.

[1149] Iti 104, "The Possessed of Morality Sutta", *Sīlasampanna-sutta,* Masefield 102-103. It seems possible that there are faint hints here of a connection between certain embodiments of spiritual virtue and a person's status as a superior "field of merit", a theme to which I will return briefly in the context of my suggestions for further future research in Ch. 6.2.

[1150] SN I.24.4, "Archery": "What five factors does he possess? He possesses the aggregate of virtue of one beyond training, the aggregate of concentration . . . . He possesses these five factors. Thus what is given to one who has abandoned five factors and who possesses five factors is of great fruit," Bodhi 191; *katamehi pañcahaṅgehi samannāgato hoti? asekhena silakkhandhena samannāgato hoti . . . . imehi pañcahaṅgehi samannāgato hoti. iti pañcaṅgavippahine pañcaṅgasamannāgate dinnaṃ mahapphalanti.* See also AN 3.6.57, Woodward and Hare I, 143-145, esp. 144; AN 5.25.251-252, Woodward and Hare III, 197, where such a person also should be accepted and granted protection; he is called "all-proficient, one who has lived the life, the best of men", *kevalī vusitavā uttamapuriso*, AN 10.2.12, Woodward and Hare V, 12.

Most pertinently for our purposes here, the Pāli-canonical version of this rubric already speaks of these qualities as five "*dharma*-aggregates" (*dhammakkhandha,* Skt. *dharmaskandha*), which are transparently intended as a positive counterpart to the negative analysis of the ordinary given person subject to suffering given in the better-known *pañcaskandha* formula, comprising *rūpa, vedanā, saññā, sankhāra* and *viññāṇa.* Now, the ordinary *pañcaskandha* certainly include the physical body (*rūpaskandha*); more than this, the entire fivefold rubric is arguably understandable as an analysis of the problem of embodiment understood in its broadest terms.[1151] If the five *dharmaskandha* are to be understood in opposition to the five ordinary *skandha,* therefore, we can understand that already, in a prototypical sense, these qualities characterise a way a realised person (the *uttamapuriso,* "highest man"[1152]) is embodied, alternative to ordinary given embodiment.

However, there is additional material in the canon, the most important among it not observed by these previous scholars, that allows us to flesh out these aggregates, and understand them as an epitome of a large body of doctrine and practice, in ways that would explain these actually rather peripheral snippets about the status of one who has accomplished them. In fact, the rubric of these five pure aggregates functions as a summation of the DN 2 model of the path of practice, on the basis of which it is possible to identify the notion of progressive reembodiment as a dominant thread running throughout that model of the path, and in turn to identify the rubric of the five pure aggregates as an epitome of that reembodiment.

[1151] I am aware that, on the face of it, this claim might strike the reader as odd and difficult to swallow. To argue it fully, however, requires that I mount an extended analysis of the terms in which we usually understand the relation between subject(ivity), mind and body. I believe that this end will be best served by a comparative analysis of generic Buddhist analyses of the person and the Cartesian "mind-body" problematic. This much, however, is complex, and I cannot essay it here; I can only hope to show in future work that the claim is justified. See §6.2.7.

[1152] Davidson 389, citing AN.

In the *Subha-sutta* DN 10, Ānanda is shown delivering a discourse, soon after the Buddha's *parinirvāṇa,* on the "three divisions (*khandha*) of things which the Lord praised, and with which he aroused, exhorted and established people" (*samādapesi nivesesi patiṭṭhāpesi*). These three were nothing other than the first three of the pure aggregates, that is, moral habit, concentration and wisdom.[1153] This threefold rubric is then used as a framework for the rehearsal, almost holus-bolus, of the DN 2 model, thus:

(1) Morality (*sīlakkhandha*): from going forth, through all the virtues and abstentions making up the sum of correct monastic deportment, i.e. DN 2.41-63, corresponding also to DN 1.8-27.[1154] Note that in DN 2, also, this section is summarised in terms of the completion of the *sīlakkhandha*: " *. . .* so the monk, on account of his morality (*sīlakkhandena*), sees no danger anywhere" (*so iminā ariyena sīlakkhandhena samannāgato ajjhattaṃ anavajjasukhaṃ*).[1155]

(2) Concentration (*samādhikkhandha*): the attainment of "guardianship of the sense-doors", that is, mastery of the four *jhānas,* i.e. DN 2.64-82.[1156]

(3) Wisdom (*paññākkhandha*): the attainment of various insights. This corresponds to DN 83-97. It thus begins with clear insight (like the leisurely and unobstructed inspection of a pure beryl) into the inadequacy of the given physical body. This, as we have seen elsewhere in this dissertation (§2.3.3), prepares the ground for the

[1153] Walshe 172; *ariyassa sīlakkhandhassa ariyassa samādhikkhandhassa ariyassa paññākkhandhassa.*

[1154] For which, see Walshe 68-73.

[1155] Walshe 100.

[1156] Walshe 100-104.

> elaboration of the *manomayakāya*.[1157] in what I have called the "snake slough" model. Upon this basis, the practitioner acquires supernatural powers and knowledges, comes to insight into the four noble truths, and completes the task of liberation.

As Davidson has pointed out, this rubric also features in a discourse that is included in the *Mahāparinibbāna-sutta* DN 16, though there it has added to it the fourth pure aggregate, namely the aggregate of liberation.

> "It is, monks, through not understanding, not penetrating four things that I as well as you have for a long time fared on round the cycle of rebirths (*saṃsāra*). What are the four? Through not understanding the Ariyan morality, through not understanding the Ariyan concentration, through not understanding the Ariyan wisdom, through not understanding the Ariyan liberation, I as well as you have for a long time fared on through the cycle of rebirths. And it is by understanding and penetrating . . . that the craving for becoming has been cut off, the tendency towards becoming has been exhausted, and there will be no more rebirth . . . . This is morality, this is concentration, this is wisdom. Concentration, when imbued with morality, brings great fruit and profit. Wisdom, when imbued with concentration, brings great fruit and profit. The mind imbued with wisdom becomes completely free from the corruptions, that is, from the corruption of sensuality, of becoming, of false views and of ignorance."[1158]

Thus, beginning in the oldest layer of the Pāli-canonical materials, in the first *vagga* of *Dīgha-nikāya* and indeed in DN 2, which may well be among the oldest material even there, we see this rubric implicit in the central model of practice and the path that accounts in detail for the progress from the state of the ordinary worldling to that of liberation and awakening. We have already had occasion to observe elsewhere in this dissertation, moreover, that a key part of that

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[1157] Walshe 104.

[1158] Walshe 254-255: *catunnaṃ bhikkhave dhammānaṃ ananubodhā appaṭivedhā evamidaṃ dīghamaddhānaṃ sandhāvitaṃ saṃsaritaṃ mamañceva tumhākañca. katamesaṃ catunnaṃ? ariyassa bhikkhave sīlassa ananubodhā appaṭivedhā evamidaṃ dīghamaddhānaṃ sandhāvitaṃ saṃsaritaṃ mamañceva tumhākañca. ariyassa bhikkhave samādhissa ananubodhā appaṭivedhā evamidaṃ dīghamaddhānaṃ sandhāvitaṃ saṃsaritaṃ mamañceva tumhākañca - ariyāya bhikkhave paññāya ananubodhā appaṭivedhā evamidaṃ dīghamaddhānaṃ sandhāvitaṃ saṃsaritaṃ mamañceva tumhākañca. ariyāya bhikkhave vimuttiyā ananubodhā appaṭivedhā evamidaṃ dīghamaddhānaṃ sandhāvitaṃ saṃsaritaṃ mamañceva tumhākañca. tayidaṃ bhikkhave ariyaṃ sīlaṃ anubuddhaṃ. paṭividdhaṃ. ariyo samādhi anubuddho paṭividdho. ariyā paññā anubuddhā paṭividdhā. ucchinnā bhavataṇhā khīṇā bhavanetti. natthidāni punabbhavo . . . . iti sīlaṃ, iti samādhi, iti paññā. sīlaparibhāvito samādhi mahapphalo hoti mahānisaṃso. samādhiparibhāvitā paññā mahapphalā hoti mahānisaṃsā. paññāparibhāvitaṃ cittaṃ sammadeva āsavehi vimuccati seyyathīdaṃ kāmāsavā bhavāsavā avijjāsavā.*

path is a kind of corporeal transformation: it involves coming to a full awareness of the inadequacy of ordinary given embodiment, the partial replacement of that embodiment with a more adequate, free and powerful alternative in *manomayakāya,* and, by the medium of that better embodiment, access to personal and direct knowledge of the insights that comprise awakening and lead to liberation (§2.3.5). Now it appears that very early on, this material was already organised under the conceit of gradually and systematically replacing the inadequate embodiment of the five ordinary given aggregates (*skandhas*). This rubric perhaps only had three members in its earliest incarnation,[1159] but grew perhaps stepwise to four and then to five by the closing of the Pāli canon, perhaps under pressure of analogy from the fivefold schema of *skandhas* for given embodiment.

These materials, I believe, show clearly that the fivefold schema of the pure aggregates is nothing less than an epitome of the ideal state of a liberated or realised being in all his dimensions, incorporating all the sweep of the path required to attain that state; and further that it is intimately tied up, on several fronts – particularly its use of the notion of *skandha,* and in the central place given to the shedding of ordinary embodiment by the "snake slough" model at the climax of that path – with an implicit notion of reembodiment from the very beginning.

Looking slightly beyond the Pāli canonical materials, there is some evidence that the five aggregates were further regarded not only as an alternative and truer embodiment of a liberated person, but as an embodiment that in some sense survived their physical death. Gregory Schopen cites a fascinating passage from the *Mūlasarvâstivādavinaya* (MSV), in which the Buddha is shown to appeal to such a concept explains to console Ānanda about the death of Śāriputra. Ānanda should not be sad that Śāriputra is dead when Ānanda sees Śāriputra's

[1159] Pun initially unintended – clearly an embodiment of my unconscious preoccupation with the corporeal conceit.

"remains" (*ring bsrel,* often used specifically for the pearl-like form of relic), he says: "'Ānanda, did the Monk Śāriputra, taking the aggregate of morality (*śīlaskandha*) with him, enter into final *nirvāṇa*?' 'No, Reverend.'" Schopen reports that the text then asks the same of *samādhiskandha, prajñāskandha, vimuktiskandha,* and *vimuktijñānadarśanaskandha,* and in each case Ānanda says, "No."[1160] In other words, the redactors of the MSV understood that these five pure *skandhas* *survive* the final *nirvāṇa* of the person, and (we infer, since it seems the text does not state this point directly) are infused in the relics, that is, the "physical remains" (*ring bsrel*). This understanding fleshes out the notion, already seen in this and like inscriptions, that relics are "quickened" by the *anāsravaskandha,* and suggests that at *parinirvāṇa* these attainments-cum-"aggregates", as the quintessence of the religious attainment of the person, are somehow transferred to the relics in order that they not pass away with him.[1161]

[1160] "Ritual Rights", 298, translation emended slightly.

[1161] Cf. also the *Kāśyapaparivarta,* which in the anonymous Qin translation avers that these five pure aggregates (called "bodies") "are not born and do not enter *parinirvāṇa*" (referring to the same complex of pure aggregates immediately afterwards as the "fivefold *dharmakāya*"!): 所有戒身。亦不生亦不般泥洹。定慧解脫度知見身亦不生亦不般泥洹。諸賢。因此五分法身說泥洹者。是法遠離空無所有, T351.199c28-200a02. Skt. §144, *śīlam āyuṣmanto na saṃsarati na parinirvāti samādhiprajñāvimukti-vimuktijñānadarśanam āyuṣmanto na saṃsarati na parinirvāti. ebhiś c' evāyuṣmanto dharmai nirvāṇaṃ sūcyate / ete ca dharmā śūnyā viviktā agrā*hyāḥ. Note that Skt. contains no reference to the "fivefold *dharmakāya*" so-named in the Qin version. Pāsādika translates: "Virtue, venerable sirs, is neither involved in the round of rebirths nor does it enter *nirvāṇa.* The same applies to meditation, wisdom, release, and the vision of truth pertaining to release. By these *dharmas,* venerable sir, *nirvāṇa* is aptly pointed out. These *dharmas* are empty, isolated and elusive;" "Dharma-Discourse (IX)", 27. In the version attributed to Lokakṣema, the corresponding passage reads: 禁戒不在死生。亦不在泥洹。智黠適等度脫見黠。亦不在死生。亦不在泥洹。是本法空無色。亦無所見, T350.193c15-18 (with no reference to the *dharmakāya*; note that the terminology for the five pure aggregates here is strange in comparison to that used by Lokakṣema e.g. in his *Aṣṭa,* where he speaks of the five aggregates as a mode of embodiment of the Buddha, for which see §4.3.6). We should note, however, that this passage is difficult to interpret in connection to the present question of whether the five aggregates represent some purported element that survives *parinirvāṇa* (though that would certainly be one possible interpretation of *na parinirvāti*). The context is a riddling dialectic typical of Prajñāpāramitā which systematically pulls the rug out from under all the usual categories in which enlightenment or liberation is understood: there is no *dharma* whatsoever that enters *parinirvāṇa* (§142), and the five pure aggregates are included among these; the Tathāgata does *not* enter final *nirvāṇa* (§145); he has *not* perfectly developed his body, and his mind is *not* perfectly manifested, etc. (§146). The target of the assertion that the five pure aggregates, too, are not born and do not enter *parinirvāṇa* thus seems to be a hypostasising attitude that takes them as discrete "things" (*dharma*), rather than any particular understanding of their vicissitudes. In the context of a text that says, on the one hand, that there is no "life force, soul, inner man, spirit, personality, 'mankind', human being, any does, actor, experiencer, knower, perceiver, anyone who activates or occasions (*ātmā vā satvo vā jīvo vā jantur vā poṣo vā pudgalo vā manujo vā mānavo vā kartā vā kārako vā vedako vā jānako vā saṃjānako vā*

In the admittedly anachronistic light of this MSV passage, then, we must suspect that when inscriptions claim that the relics (= *ring bsrel*) of the Buddha are "quickened" (*paribhāvita*) by these same five attainments-cum-aggregates, they mean nothing more or less than that the Buddha *lives on in* the relics – they mean, that is, to paraphrase the joyful Christian song I was taught to sing at Catholic primary school, "The Buddha's not dead; he is alive . . ."

If this is indeed the case, and the claim that the five pure aggregates animate the relics truly represents an incipient form of the claim that the Buddha in some sense lives on after his *parinirvāṇa,* it means that the relic cult comprises an important, hitherto missed link in the history of the embodiments of the Buddha in another sense also. As we will see later in this dissertation, in the early centuries of the Common Era, the claim that the Buddha was in fact extremely long-lived or immortal, despite appearances to the contrary, was to grow in currency and influence, and eventually to be tied inextricably into discourse about his ideal embodiments.[1162] No form of this claim can be traced in the texts as early as the inscriptions with which we are dealing here, however, and this may therefore represent one more form in which the true origins of body discourse lie in the shadowy realms of practice surrounding the

utthāpako vā samutthāpako vā)" (§142, Pāsādika (IX), 26) that enters *parinirvāṇa,* but on the other hand, that neither does the Tathāgata enter *parinirvāṇa,* the safest conclusion is in fact probably that the text is agnostic about the post-mortem vicissitudes of the five pure aggregates. However, it may be safe to conclude at least that if the text goes to the trouble of negating the proposition that the five pure aggregates enter *parinirvāṇa,* then there may well have been a view current that held that they do, in order for it to be a worthy polemical target.

[1162] One key way in which the notion of the Buddha's immortality was reflected in notions about his embodiment was, as we shall see, in the claim that his body was like or of adamant, and in this connection, it is surely not insignificant that in this same Senavarma Inscription, we also see the description of the Buddha's body as "a mass of adamant", which is to my knowledge the first instance in our record of this association between adamant and his body. See below, n. 1186, p. 553, p. 559 for detailed discussion of this aspect of the inscription.

relic cult. We will have occasion to revisit this point later in this dissertation, when we consider the question of the Buddha's immortality in greater detail.

We see even more clearly that this fivefold rubric was understood to encapsulate an ideal of embodiment, however, when we look slightly forward in the record to other materials, that is, to (relatively) early post-Pāli-canonical texts like the Prajñāpāramitā (e.g. Lokakṣema's *Aṣṭa*) and the Sarvâstivāda **Mahāvibhāṣā*. Here I must anticipate findings I can only lay out in detail later in this dissertation.

Thus, we will see in §4.3.6 of this dissertation that in Lokakṣema's translation of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā-sūtra,* a body comprised of the five aggregates is understood as the culmination of the monumental accumulation of merit by a Buddha through is long *bodhisattva* career, in which connection it is listed as one of the things in which a *bodhisattva-mahāsattva* "rejoices" in order to transfer the merit of so rejoicing towards the end of obtaining *anuttarasaṃyaksaṃbodhi* for himself. This understanding of the Buddha's embodiment in the pure aggregates is part of a long list of the immense merits of the Buddha (in which we might rejoice), which is repeated several times. As we will see there, however, when the list is abbreviated in the Chinese, the notion of embodiment in the aggregates is retained and given pride of place, as if it serves as the epitome or even the pinnacle of the merits of the Buddha. In other words, as I argue in greater detail below, it seems that embodiment in the five pure aggregates is one of the main ways Lokakṣema's version of *Aṣṭa* envisages the ideal embodiments of the Buddha.

We will also see, in §4.4.9 of this dissertation, that the five pure aggregates played a key role in one Sarvâstivāda definition of the *dharmakāya.* In that context, the "pure aggregates" tend

more often to be referred to as the "aggregates [of those] beyond further training" (*aśaikṣaskandha*), but for the sake of simplicity I will refer to them here as "pure aggregates" as in reference to the instances of them in relic and Prajñāpāramitā discourse. The Sarvâstivāda definition of *dharmakāya* at issue understood the *dharmakāya* primarily in terms of the *aśaikṣadharmas* comprising *bodhi*. A close examination of relevant passages in the literature below shows, I argue, that this definition is found in two versions: one, found in the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* (AKBh), in terms of a tenfold list of *aśaikṣadharmas;* another, found in different parts of AKBh and in the **Mahāvibhāṣā*, in terms of the five ("pure") aggregates. I argue in detail below that these two definitions, different though they may be on the surface, are in fact one and the same. This means, however, that definition of the *dharmakāya* in terms of these five aggregates is one of two major arms of the technical Sarvâstivāda definition of the *dharmakāya*. In the case of the Abhidharma, also, then, the five pure aggregates play a central role in the envisagement of the ideal embodiments of the Buddha.

No previous scholar, to my knowledge, has observed these connections between inscriptional language about relics and language in other genres of Buddhist text about other ideal embodiments of the Buddha. I consider this link one of the most important and exciting pieces of hitherto overlooked evidence that urges that we must understand relics and Buddha-bodies to have been part of the same larger conceptual field for the tradition.

I believe that these facts about the broader history and contexts of use of the rubric of the five pure aggregates provide the proper context in which we should interpret the inscriptional claim that relics are quickened or suffused with those same aggregates.

I believe that the pure aggregates already comprised a prototypical doctrine of alternate embodiment, i.e. of a more adequate conception of the embodiment appropriate to the liberated state, even in the Pāli-canonical materials. This is indicated by the very fact that they are called "aggregates" (*skandha*), after the model of the analysis of the ordinary embodiment of the person suffering in *saṃsāra;* and by the fact that the model of the path in which they are embedded, and which they epitomise, culminates in a full liberation that includes radical reembodiment along the way. It seems likely that this, in fact, was the understanding that led to the application of this rubric to the relics in these inscriptions. The authors of the inscriptions wanted to claim that the Buddha and his power really were *in* the relics, such that worship of the relics would be as efficacious as worship of the Buddha "in person". It was natural to claim that the part of the Buddha that the Buddha himself had scripturally implied did not die with final *parinirvāṇa* was still "in" the relics, which is to say, effectively, that the relics bodied forth or embodied the Buddha in the world.

Further, it seems likely that later authors,[1163] in advancing the claim that the most veritable embodiment of the Buddha was in fact not in relics but in some other form of embodiment, picked up on the implications of this use of the pure aggregates, and thus applied the rubric to the kinds of embodiment they wished to promote as more veritable. We should remember, in this context, that, as we shall see, new visions of the Buddha's various embodiments, and his most veritable embodiment, are advanced in the early Prajñāpāramitā texts immediately alongside a polemic against the relics as the most merit-worthy objects of cultic worship, so that we should not be surprised to see the direct appropriation of what we might call "relic talk" to be spun in ways that works against the relic cult. Thus, in Lokakṣema's *Aṣṭa,* the

[1163] In the balance, we are obliged to regard the inscriptional application of the five pure *skandhas* to relics as most probably earlier that these various other materials, since we have concrete dates for them back to the turn of the Common Era, as we do not for the texts.

fivefold rubric was to be applied, rather than to relics, to the person of the Buddha as the fruit of countless aeons of virtue and the object of meditative rejoicing by *bodhisattvas;* and in the Sarvâstivāda, it was to come to be applied directly to the *dharmakāya* itself.

In these Kharoṣṭhī inscriptions that apply the formula of quickening by the five pure aggregates to the relics they enshrine and eulogise, therefore, I contend we see an important step in an ongoing dialectic of development of Buddha body doctrine. This dialect will remain entirely invisible to us, however, if, as has been the case up until the present, we fail to recognise that relics are properly to be understood as one of a range of possibilities of embodiment ascribed to the Buddhas, that is, if we fail to see the basic conceptual ground upon which that dialectic was engaged.

Of course, this dialectic was engaged over a much range of materials than the exemplary texts we can enter into here.[1164] To give one further example, in a passage in the *Milindapañha* that seems designed to prove the mutual commutability of relics and other bodies on precisely these grounds, the pure *skandhas* are even spoken of in the same breath in application to relics *and also* to close antecedents to other bodies of the Buddha. Here, it is very clear that for this text, relics and the prototypes of the *dharmakāya* fall squarely in the same conceptual space. The text posits a functional equivalence between the relics of the Tathāgata and the teachings (*dharmavinaya*), precisely as informed (*paribhāvita*; "set round with" in Horner's translation) these five virtues:

> "Only when the Lord had appointed as the teacher the jewel of the relics and Dhamma and discipline and the instruction[,] that are set round with moral habit, concentration, wisdom, freedom, [and] the vision of knowledge and freedom[1165] did he himself attain

[1164] See also e.g. *Vim* Ch. X, for which see n. 2161.

[1165] *sīlasamādhipaññāvimuttivimuttiñāṇadassanaparibhāvitaṃ dhāturatanañca dhammañca anusatthiñca . . .*

> complete *nibbāna* in the element of *nibbāna* that has no substrate remaining (*anupādisesāya nibbāṇadhātuyā parinibbuto*)."[1166]

In an immediately preceding passage, it is explained that it is possible for people to receive merit from offerings to the Buddha, even though he, being *parinibbuta,* does not accept, because "as palmyra-leaf fans and fans for fanning the fire are (among the) conditions for producing a wind, so are the Tathāgata's relics and the jewel of (his) knowledge (*tathāgatassa dhātu ca ñāṇaratanañ ca*) the conditions for achieving three merits."[1167] In both these passages, the important point for our current purposes is the functional equivalence that is drawn between relics and various other qualities that are frequently identified as the substance of the Buddha's "bodies": his *dharma qua* teaching, and his *jñāna* (cf. *prajñāpāramitā*).[1168]

Thus, the application of the rubric of the five pure aggregates to relics in Senavarma Inscription and two other Kharoṣṭhī inscriptions is, I hold, our earliest firm evidence that relics were regarded as veritable bodies of the Buddha. We can therefore regard this understanding of relics as dating back at least to the beginning of the Common Era, and this means that it is datable earlier than any other doctrine of a special body of the Buddha known to us.

However, the Senavarma Inscription, alone among the Kharoṣṭhī Inscriptions available to us, goes considerably beyond this formula in its articulation of its understanding of what is worthy of worship and celebration about the relics. I believe that the insight won thus far in our argument, that the inscription understands the relics as a veritable body of the Buddha or is claiming that they are, is the key to further insights into the reading of this difficult inscription,

[1166] Horner, *Mil* I, 137.

[1167] Horner, *Mil* I, 136.

[1168] Note further the sense in which, alongside relics, the Buddha's gnosis is here treated as his most central and veritable embodiment; this is a theme that will occupy us much through Chapter 4.3 and 4.4, in dealing with Prajñāpāramitā and Sarvâstivāda materials.

and that other dimensions of its description of the relics also make sense in light of the same interpretation. Further, I believe that, interpreted in this manner, the inscription offers even stronger evidence that relics were indeed understood as bodies, and that the Senavarma Inscription is therefore a very valuable witness to a pivotal phase in the development of ideas about the Buddhas embodiments as a whole. In what follows, I will attempt to build on the careful work of previous scholars in reading this difficult inscription to offer further insight into the ideas at work in two key sections.

First, towards its end, in lines 11e-12d, the Senavarma Inscription says (in Salomon's translation, altered slightly in light of some of von Hinüber's readings):

> "The *dharma* which was completely realised by the worthy Śākyamuni, the truly enlightened, [which is] the destroyer of pride, the remover of thirsting, the uprooter (?) of clinging, the cutting off of the cycle of rebirth,[1169] the destruction of thirst, complete, free of passion, cessation (?), calm, excellent, free of fever,[1170] immovable, free of disease, totally perfected, totally chaste, this totally completed [*dharma*] – *may it rest in that immortal relic* [*amudae dhatue* = ** amṛtāyāṃ dhātau*[1171]]*;* where shall be the end and completion of this beginningless and restless *saṃsāra*, where all of these feelings will become cooled."[1172]

[1169] Translated with von Hinüber, who reads *vartopacchedas,* "the cutting off of the cycle of rebirth" ("das Abschneiden des Geburtenkreislaufes"), *Beiträge* 37; see n. 1172 for the AN passage upon which he bases this reading.

[1170] Von Hinüber leaves this word (*advarasa*) untranslated, and adds a note, *Beiträge* 38.

[1171] The predication of "undying" (*amuda* = Skt. *amṛta*) as an epithet of the relic is also of interest for the development of the ideology of the undying, of course, a point to which I will return below when I return to this theme in the context of the development of immortal embodiments; see the opening of §5.1.2.

[1172] Salomon 271-272; my emphasis. *ye teṇa śakamuṇiṇarahato samasavudheṇa/ dhamo abhisamughaso* [read *to*?] *votavacheto taṣo kṣayo aśeṣo/ virago ṇira* [read *ro*?] *so śato praṇito advarasa aṇijo aroga/ acata* [**ṇ*] *iṭh*(*u*) *acadavrama io acatapayosaṇo* [--] *tatra amudae dhatue ṇivatato* [;]/ *yatra imasa aṇavatagrasa sasarasa kṣaye payosaṇe hakṣati* [,]/ *yatra imaṇa vedaïdaṇa sarve śidalibhaviśati* [.]; 265-266. Von Hinüber provides the following Skt. equivalent: *yas tena śākyamuninā arhatā sakyaksaṃbuddhena dharmo 'bhisaṃbuddho madanirmadahaṇ pipāsāvinayo ālayasamudghāto vartopacchedas tṛṣṇākṣayo 'śeṣa-virāga-nirodhaḥ śāntaḥ praṇīta* advarasa *aneja aroga atyāntaniṣṭha atyāntabrahmacārī atyāntaparyavasānaḥ tatra amṛtāyāṃ dhātau ni(r)vartantām yatra imasya anavarāgrasya saṃsārasya kṣayaḥ paryavasāno bhaviṣyati, yatra imāsāṃ vedayitānāṃ sarvaṃ śītalībhaviṣyati;* von Hinüber, *Beiträge* 37-38. Von Hinüber points out, following Fussman in this regard, that this section is closely paralleled in the Pāli canonical notion of the *cattāro aggapasāda* or fourfold "supreme clarity of mind"; von Hinüber 37-38. He refers us e.g. to AN 2.34, "Faiths", Woodward and Hare II, 39: "Monks, as compared with things compounded or not compounded, freedom from passion is reckoned best of them, to wit: the subduing o f pride in self, the restraint of

This passage is by no means exempt from the difficulties that beset the inscription as a whole, and we must first recognise that there is disagreement about some of its most basic features – the meaning of the main verb (*ni/vṛt, nir/vṛt*), which Salmon here translates "come to rest".[1173] Oskar von Hinüber[1174] disagrees with the readings of Fussman and Salomon before him, which he says do not follow the usual semantics of this verb.[1175] He suggests rather that it should be interpreted in the sense of "attain peace" ("zur Ruhe kommen"). In conjunction with this suggestion, he interprets the subject of the verb as the "sentient beings" of 11b.[1176]

The difficulty with von Hinüber's reading is accounting for exactly what is meant by the intervening clause about *dharma.* While I admit I find it difficult to follow the details of von Hinüber's translation, I take it that he takes this entire relative clause (*yaś . . .*) to be correlative with "in *that* undying element" (*tatra . . .*), so that the *dharma* clause is a detailed description of the *nirvāṇadhātu* in which the text expresses the wish that sentient beings will attain peace.[1177]

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thirst, the removal of clinging, the cutting off of the base of rebirth, the destruction of craving, freedom from passion, ending, Nibbāna;" *yāvatā bhikkhave dhammā saṅkhatā vā asaṅkhatā vā, virāgo tesaṃ dhammānaṃ aggamakkhāyati. yad idaṃ madanimmadano pipāsavinayo ālayasamugghāto vaṭṭupacchedo taṇhakkhayo virāgo nirodho nibbānaṃ.*

[1173] Fussman reads, "que ce <*Dharma*>? absolument final se trouve là, dans l'imortelle relique . . .", "Inscription de Senavarma" 8.

[1174] Readers must bear in mind throughout the following discussion of the Senavarma Inscription that my understanding of von Hinüber's recent *Beiträge,* which reviews (see Salomon, Fussman) have recognised as representing on the whole a significant step forward in the interpretation of the inscription, is severely hampered by my very limited understanding of German. I will provide von Hinüber's German original in footnotes, so that, in case my understanding is flawed, readers better versed in German than myself will be able to perceive the fact and correct accordingly.

[1175] "Das Verbum *ṇivatato* wird von F. und S. als *ni(r)vartatāṃ* aufgefaßt und mit F. 'se trouve' und S. 'may it rest', was nicht der gewöhnlichen Semantik von *ni(r)vṛt* entspricht: *ni-vṛt* 'aufgeben, abwenden, zurückkehren', *nir-vṛt* 'aufhören';" *Beiträge* 38.

[1176] "Subject können die in §11b genannten Wesen sein;" Beiträge 38. 11b reads: *sarvasatvaṇa hidasuhadae hoto* = **sarvasattvānāṃ hitasukhatāyai bhavatu*, "May it be for the benefit and well-being of all beings".

[1177] Von Hinüber translates: "Welche Lehre durch diesen Śākyamuni, die Würdigen, die vollkommen Erleuchteten erkannt ist, die Unterdrückung des Dünkels, die Stillung des Durstes, die Zerstörung des

Certainly, as we will see below, it seems as though the inscription in other places also makes equally complex and confusing use of multiple correlative clauses, and so this reading is not impossible.

However, it seems that von Hinüber's main objection to the reading of Fussman and Salomon before him, and the factor that drives him to seek this alternative reading, is that he simply finds it conceptually implausible that the inscription *can* be saying that the Dharma described by the long correlative clause could be in the relic: "How could Nirvāṇa enter into a relic?"[1178] This objection, I believe, rests on false assumptions about what can and cannot be said or thought of a relic, and therefore should not be our guide. Indeed, we might as well ask "How can morality" – or *samādhi,* or wisdom, or liberation, or insight [into the *jñāna* of liberation] – "enter into a relic?" In the context of an inscription that is already demonstrably willing to see the relic as infused by or quickened with such attributes, the attribution of penetration or participation of *dharma* in some sense is surely, if no difficulty, no more of a difficulty than what we already know to be the case.

Allowing, then, that the precise meaning of the verb *ni(r)/vṛt* remains a problem, but accepting for the moment the basic reading shared by Salomon and Fussman whereby its subject is the *dharma* of the correlative clause, the relevant point for our purposes here seems clear enough.

Haftens, das Abschneiden des Geburtenkreislaufes, das Erlöschen des Durstes, das vollständige Ende der Leidenschaft, das Aufhören, die ruhige, die vorzüglichste, *advarasa*, die Festigkeit, die Freiheit von Krankenheit, die gänzliche Vollkommenheit, die vollständige Keuschheit, die schließliche Vollendung – dort in dem Ort des Nichttodes mögen (sie) zur Ruhe kommen, wo das End, das Aufhören dieses endlosen Geburtenkreislaufes ist, wo alle diese (leidvollen) Empfindungen kühl sein werden;" *Beiträge* 37.

[1178] "Wie sollte das Nirvāṇa in die Reliquien eingehen?" *Beiträge* 38. We might object to this it is best not to allow our intuitions to guide our interpretation of syntax, even where those intuitions are so extraordinarily well-informed as those of von Hinüber; indeed, even von Hinüber himself seems to say as much, when he says "Dennoch kann man jetzt einem beinahe vollständigen Verständnis rechte nahe kommen, wenn man sich zunächst die syntaktische Struktur von Augen führt;" *Beiträge* 24.

Dharma*,* in a full sense of everything realised by Śākyamuni himself, is understood (or hoped) to somehow be *in the relic.* This is a fascinating sublation of the category of *dharma* by that of relic (or vice versa), and it is here seen very early – before we even have any solid evidence that the concept of *dharmakāya* (or any other special Buddha *kāya* so named) even exists. The most plausible, direct understanding of this passage, it seems to me, is that *dharma* itself could infuse relics – that is, not just the five pure aggregates ascribed to the *dharmakāya* by later texts, which we see ascribed to relics here as elsewhere, but the essence of the very *dharma,* and not only as a teaching, but as an object of realisation and a domain of salvific experience, as the lengthy description of what is meant by *dharma* in the relative clause shows. With a little (hopefully forgivable) rhetorical hyperbole, we might even say that in this passage, we have encountered the first ever *dharma* body – and it is a relic!

There is more to say about this passage, I believe, and below I will return to it and explore the ambiguity of the word *dhātu* ("relic"/"[*nirvāṇa-*]realm"). In order to explore this question, however, we first must turn to the second key section of the inscription, in which is found the claim already examined above that the relic is quickened with the five pure aggregates. In the context of that passage is found another use of the word *dhātu,* which I think will help us make sense of the present passage.

The claim of interfusion of *dharma* and relic envisaged in the latter passage just examined may help us in turn to make sense of the earlier key passage, a very difficult long passage in the middle of the inscription. It is only with trepidation that I can propose any interpretation of this passage at all, since I am keenly aware that I lack the necessary linguistic and palaeographic expertise to come to grips with the original text, and such experts as Fussman, Salomon and von Hinüber encounter so many difficulties precisely in the places where my

proposal stands or falls.[1179] However, given that, as it seems, the syntax[1180] and lexicon are on their own not clear enough to allow of unambiguous interpretation, it may be justified to advance an interpretation based upon conceptual considerations that emerge from the interpretation of the inscription in the context of relics as veritable bodies of the Buddha, as shown by the ascription to them of the five pure aggregates etc., and an interpretation that therefore allows itself to draw on what we know from other discourses about Buddha bodies.

The passage in question reads as follows, with Salomon's translation interleaved, but adjusted in places for readings suggested by von Hinüber.[1181] I have also included Fussman's translation selectively, in places where it varies from Salomon on points I wish to discuss in my analysis. I include in the footnotes, as above, von Hinüber's suggestions for Sanskrit equivalents of the Gandhārī. I have omitted large parts of what Salomon translates as an earlier sentence (but which I interpret as merely the first part of an even larger "sentence"), which describes the Buddha in great detail, along with the description of Senavarma, in order to clear the way for consideration only of references to the establishment of the relics.

3b. . . . *bhagavado śarira aho* [.][1182]
. . . there was . . . a body [relic] of the Lord
. . . il y a eût des reliques corporelles du Bienheureux . . .

3c. *svenavarme . . .*
[I] Seṇavarma . . .

[1179] Salomon, for example, says of this passage, "This phrase [5d-6a], with the following passage through 7c, is the most problematic portion of the entire inscription . . . . both the overall syntactic structure and many of the individual terms are highly uncertain;" "Inscription of Senavarma" 276. Von Hinüber agrees: "Dieser Abschnitt wurde von S. mit viel Rechte als 'most prolematic portion of the entire inscription' bezeichnet;" 24.

[1180] See below, n. 1198.

[1181] Salomon's translation is presented in a few places out of the original line order; I have rearranged it to conform with the Sanskrit, at the price of some unnaturalness.

[1182] Von Hinüber suggests Skt. *bhagavataḥ śārīram abhūt; Beiträge* 20.

4b. *te tasa bhagavato . . .* [1183]
[this relic] of that Lord . . .
ces reliques du Bienheureux . . .

5c. *dhatu praṣṭhavemi.*
. . . I establish this relic.
. . . je dépose ces reliques.

5d. *ye . . .*[1184]
He who,

5e. *visayuyeṇa (paci)maeṇa śarireṇa ṇiṣaye-* 6a. *ta* [.][1185]
resorting (?) with his final body,[1186] separated from

[1183] Von Hinüber suggests Skt. *tāḥ tasya bhagavato . . .*

[1184] It has been necessary here to split line 5d of the original inscription and place part of it after 5e, in order that the correspondence with Salomon's translation may be kept as close as possible.

[1185] This syllable is found at the beginning of line 6a in the inscription, but I have placed it here to make it easier to make sense of the inscription and translation together.

[1186] Von Hinüber argues that the use of the two different but apparently synonymous terms **antimaśarīra* and *paimaśarīra* in such close proximity to one another, in combination with the word *visaṃyu(k)ta,* which he reads as meaning that the two bodies were somehow dissociated *from one another,* means that the referents of the two terms must be different. If I understand him correctly, he takes *paścimaśarīra* to refer somehow to the body reconstituted by the relics at the moment of the *parinirvāṇa* proper to the relics themselves. "Auffällig ist, daß in §5d und 5e *antimaśarīra* und *paimaśarīra* verwendet werden. Wenn *visayuyena* als *visaṃyu(k)tena* richtig verstanden ist, wird zwischen beiden ein Unterschied gemacht. Im Theravāda-Buddhismus ist *antimaśarīra* der Körper in der letzten Geburt bei der Beendigung des Geburtenkreislaufes, CPD s.v. Über *paścimaśarīra* kann man nur Vermutungen anstellen. Es is immerhin möglich, daß der wirklich letzte körper des Buddha gemeint ist, der im Augenblick, da die Lehre untergeht, entsteht und in das endgültige Nirvāṇa eingeht, wie es etwa im Kommentar zum Dīghanikāya usw. (HPL §85 Anm. 150) geschildert wird. Danach gibt es drei Nirvāṇas: 1. *kilesaparinibbāna* unter dem Bodhi-Baum, 2. *khandhaparinibbāna* in Kusinārā und 3. *dhātuparinibbāna* am Ende des Lehre (Sv 899, 27-900, 12);" 25. Von Hinüber is himself obviously aware of how speculative this reading is ("über *paścimaśarīra* kann man nur Vermutungen anstellen"). Nonetheless, I am unsure that we have any reasons for believing that this tradition of a second *parinirvāṇa* proper to the relics was current in this period, and therefore to interpret the word *śarīra* thus as referring to a moment when the relics are reconstituted *in humanoid or anthropomorphic form* is not an over-reading. It seems more economical simply to think, if von Hinüber is right that the two kinds of "final" *śarīra* here have different referents, that the referent of *paścimaśarīra* is not rather simply the relics proper. This might mean, indeed, that the text is self-consciously exploiting the polysemy of the term to express its claims of equivalence between the Buddha and the relics. Von Hinüber's reading is nevertheless instructive, inasmuch as it shows that even in the thick of this middle portion of the passage, and in at least one of two terms so apparently similar as *antimaśarīra* and *paścimaśarīra, śarīra* may retain its reference to relics.

A lingering problem with this reading, however, as we will see immediately below, is that if we are to make such a distinction, it is the *antimaśarīra,* and not the *paścimaśarīra,* that is described as "an adamantine mass" (**vajrasaṃghana*). If, as seems most plausible to me, it is likely that relics rather than the Buddha's final, perishable earthly body would be likened to adamant, then the identification of the *antimaśarīra* with the final earthly body, which von Hinüber makes here on the basis of canonical passages collected in Childers, would be incoherent, and von Hinüber's nice distinction breaks down. See immediately below, p. 553 ff., for further discussion of the implications of this question.

5d. [cont.] *tad(e) tadiśate atmabhavate vayirasaghaṇad(e) aṃdimaśarirate*
this last body of such a kind, his own body,[1187] a diamantine mass,

6a. . . .[1188] *aṇutaravosi apisavudha* [,] *apisavujīta*
[he by whom] ultimate enlightenment was completely realised, and, having become completely enlightened –

6b. *te dhama tatha driṭha ya sake añe paśeait aṇoma aṇasia* [-]
having seen the *dharma* in such a way that other(s) (? *anya*) could also see it in its full extent[1189] –

6c. *te dhama apisavujīta* [;] *savasaṃgharaṇa (kṣa)ye* [;]
that *dharma* he completely realised, [and so] the end of all the *saṃskāras* [was attained by him] ;

6d. *sarvajatijaramaraṇabhayaviṇavatasa*
of him who is freed from all fear,[1190] birth, old age, and death,

6e. *avayi-drogati*[1191]*kṣayapayosaṇe kiḍe*
who has accomplished the destruction of bad rebirth,[1192]

6f. *niṣanesarvajadijaramaraṇasa tasa daṇi aṇuvatae*
of him who has brought down (?) all birth, old age, and death, of him who is now

7a. *pariṇivudasa ima dhadu śila(pari)bhavita*

For a possible Skt. parallel to the notion of the adamantine body here in *Vim* (which has *vajrasaṃhatano*), see n. 2357 below.

[1187] This seems to be an overtranslation for *ātmabhāva*; on the semantics of this word, see n. 951.

[1188] See n. 1185.

[1189] I have completely changed the translation of this line after von Hinüber, *Beiträge* 24. Von Hinüber refers in this connection to two separate formulae in the canon, e.g. SuN 934, *abhibhu hi so anabhibhuto/ sakkhidhammaṃ anitihamadassi,/ tasmā hi tassa bhagavato sāsane/ appamatto sadā namassamanusikkheti;* "For he, the Conqueror unconquered,/ witnessed the Dhamma,/ not by hearsay,/ but directly, himself./ So, heedful, you//should always train/ in line with that Blessed One's message," Thanissaro Bhikkhu, trans., http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/kn/snp/snp.4.14.than.html, accessed May 25, 2007; for the idea of making it possible for others to see the Dhamma, e.g. *tathā dhammaṃ desetaṃ yathāhaṃ dhammaṃ passeyyaṃ,* "teaching me the Dhamma in such a way that I might see the Dhamma", SN 90.8 "Channa", Bodhi 946-947.

[1190] Following von Hinüber and altering Salomon slightly.

[1191] I have changed Salomon's reading here with von Hinüber, as I explain in the next footnote.

[1192] Following von Hinüber and altering Salomon's translation once more. Von Hinüber sees in *avayi-drogati* an equivalent to *apāya-durgati* by "Dardic metathesis", *Beiträge* 26.

totally liberated [*parinirvṛtas*],[1193] these relics [of him], saturated [*paribhāvita*] with virtue

. . . . ces reliques . . .

7b. *samasiprañavimutkiñaṇadra(śa)paribhavita*
saturated with concentration, wisdom, release, knowledge and sight,

7c. *ime śarireṇa tadagadapravadiśaṇivaṇadhatugade*
these, with the body, gone in the best direction of the Tathāgata,[1194] entered into *nirvāṇa*,
elles . . .

7d. *ta pratiṭhavemi* [.][1195]
these I establish.[1196]
je les dépose.[1197]

The first problem we need to face is a difficulty that seems to arise from an impossibility of deciding syntactic number in the case of words referring to the body or bodies and relic or relics of the Buddha.[1198] Is the inscription talking about one *śarīra*, or more than one? In light of the fact that scholars often use the distinction between singular and plural in use of this word to distinguish between its use to refer to the living body or whole corpse (singular) as

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[1193] I here omit three words from Salomon's translation, "never to return", to which I cannot find any equivalent in the original.

[1194] Reading with von Hinüber, who himself however is tentative: "in die beste (?) Himmelsrichtung des Tathāgata", *Beiträge* 24; see 26-27 for his erudite explanation of his reasons for suggesting this reading, on the basis of commentary to a Jātaka verse.

[1195] Original inscription text for 5d-7d at Salomon, "Inscription of Senavarma" 264-265. Von Hinüber suggests the following Skt: *yas tadā tādṛśata ātmabhāvato vajrasaṃghanato 'ntimaśarīrato visaṃyu(k)tena paścimaśarīrena* niśrayitvā *anuttarabodhim abhisaṃbuddho 'bhisambudhyitvā taṃ dharmaṃ tathā dṛṣṭvā, yathā* ko *'nyo paśyet anūnam anadhikaṃ taṃ dharmam, abhisambudhyitvā sarvasaṃskārakṣayaṃ sarvajātijarāmaraṇabhayavinipātasya apāyadurgatikṣayaparyavasānaḥ kṛto nidhanaṃ sarvajātijarāmaraṇasya, tasya idānīm anupādāya parinirvṛtasya imā dhātavaḥ śīlaparibhāvitāḥ samādhiprajñāvimuktijñānadarśa*[*na*]*paribhāvitā imāḥ śarīreṇa tathāgata*pravadiśa*nirvāṇadhātugatās tāḥ pratiṣṭhāpayāmi; Beiträge* 24.

[1196] English translation at Salomon, "Inscription of Senavarma" 269-270.

[1197] Fussman's French translation in "Inscription de Senavarma" 7-8.

[1198] These words include (referring to them by line number) *dhatu/dhadu* (5c, 7a); all the instances of *śarira* (some uninflected) (3b, 5d, 5e, 7c); *kṣaye* (6c); *kiḍe* (6e); *aho* (3b); *paribhavita* (7a, 7b) etc.; the pronoun *ime* (7c, 7d) and *ima* (7a); the relative pronouns *te* (4b, 6b, 6c), *ta* (7d), *ye* (5d), and *ya* (6b). The term *atmabhava* (Skt. *ātmabhāva*, "body") (5d) also conceivably bears on this problem, but, if Salomon's reading is right, bears the uninflected ablative suffix *–tas,* and therefore is uninflected for number.

opposed to relics (plural), this question is of more than hair-splitting interest. It seems, however, that Gandhārī does not necessarily preserve distinct morphology for all the categories that are kept distinct in Sanskrit.[1199] This means, I take it, that here syntax does not provide us with any means for distinguishing between uses of the key words (*śarīra, dhātu*) to refer to relics and to refer to other things ("bodies", a "realm" like that of *nirvāṇa,* etc.).

A related problem is determining whether the inscription still talking in 5d-5e about the relic, or rather about some other body of the Buddha for which it confusingly uses the same term, *śarīra* (cf. 3b, where it is clearly "relic"). Salomon here uses the term "body" where he elsewhere uses "relic", giving us nothing to indicate that it is in fact the same word at stake in the original text, even though there is nothing else in his translation (nor, I will argue, in the text) that makes it impossible to understand that both terms refer ultimately to the same entity.

Certainly, if were are to understand that the "final body" (*antimaśarīra, paścimaśarīra*) of 5d-5e was something entirely different from the relic(s), and therefore that the "final body" was a perishable thing that no longer exists, it would be impossible to make sense of the description

[1199] In this connection, Salomon elsewhere speaks of "the . . . incomprehensible distribution of variant endings"; Salomon, *Ancient Buddhist Scrolls* 130. Salomon is here speaking directly of nominative singular masculine and neuter, but he also mentions "several other morphological categories": his other examples include the singular accusative and singular locative; he also gives unusal forms of singular instrumental, plural locatuve, plural genitive which, however, do not seem as though they would necessarily lead to ambiguity; 131-132. In some cases, we have only tendencies rather than rules to work with, as where e.g. in the *Rhinoceros Horn Sūtra* *–o* predominates over *–a* in the nominative but the reverse is true in the accusative, 131; numerous exceptions exist to both these trends, so that in any individual instance we are helpless to decide on the basis of "morphology" alone. Salomon does not say enough here, however, to tell us whether or not we would expect distinct morphology in some of the cases that concern us most here, as for example between singular and plural endings, and between nominative and accusative in the plural. See also Brough, *Gāndhārī Dhammapada* 113-117. That the syntactic number of words referring to bodies and relics is a matter of free interpretation also seems clear even from scrutiny of the various translations of the present text. Salomon's translation, for example, is confusing in this regard. For Salomon, the "relic" is at first singular (3b, 4b, 5c), but then mysteriously becomes plural, seemingly when associated with the pronoun *ima/ime* (7a, 7c, 7d); and yet it is certainly the same object or objects that are being discussed all along. Moreover, on this point he differs from Fussman, who has the relics in the plural even in the former part of the passage. I am grateful also to Andrew Glass for advice via email about this question, and for references to sources.

of it as an "aggregate of adamant" [1200] (*vayirasaghaṇa,* "diamantine mass" Salomon, for Skt. **vajrasaṃghana*[1201]) – such evanescence would hardly be "adamantine"! – meaning that at least the term *antimaśarīra*[1202] should refer to the relic, rather than some other "body" of the Buddha.

I propose that in attempting to resolve some of these problems, we first suspend the spurious appearance of distinctions created by using different words in different places for the same original term, and also acknowledge the ambiguity that the fluid morphology for syntactic number creates. Next, I suggest we take our cue from the end of the inscription examined above, where the text is willing to talk of the infusion of the *dharma* realised by the Buddha in the very relic itself.

On this basis, I thus first propose to somewhat artificially regularise the syntactical number, singular or plural, of the relic(s) of which the inscription speaks. To this end, for the interim, I propose to somewhat arbitrarily presume that various forms that are used to speak of the relics throughout the text, including most particularly the verbal form *aho* (3b),[1203] the pronouns *ima* (7a), *ime* (7c, 7d), *te* (4b),[1204] *ta* (7d) and adjectival modifiers –*paribhavita* (7a, 7b), -*gade* (7c), and

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[1200] See below, p. 1081, for further discussion of the later development of this conceit with regard to bodies, including more discussion of this aspect of the current inscription.

[1201] Salomon does not say in his notes what Sanskrit word he is reading for *saghaṇa* here; Fussman has "corps final *fait du diamant*", "Inscription de Senavarma" 7, reading *vajra-saṃghana.* Von Hinüber also suggests the Skt. equivalent *saṃghana, Beiträge* 24.

[1202] See above n. 1186 for discussion of von Hinüber suggestion that two different kinds of body may be meant by the terms used here. I discuss there the problems raised by von Hinüber's reading in terms of the considerations raised here, namely that it would mean that the final earthly body of the Buddha was described as "adamantine", a characterisation that would be odd, to say the least, when predicated of a perishable body. Further on the ascription to the Buddha of a body like or of adamant, see below, §5.1.4.

[1203] Note that Fussman and Salomon differ here, suggesting that there are no morphological grounds upon which we can make any distinction.

[1204] Salomon and Fussman differ.

the nouns *śarira* (3b)[1205] and *dhatu* (5c)[1206]/*dhadu* (7a), are all uniformly *singular*. I propose this measure not because I necessarily believe that all the forms *are* in their intention singular, but because this is a way of accurately reflecting in a translation shorthand the ambiguity of the original forms.

Of course, this assumption, which amounts to an hypothesis, is falsifiable, and I am aware that my ignorance of Gandhārī means I am skating on thin speculative ice. It may be that one or another of these forms can only be plural, in which case I will have to modify my interpretation. For the meantime, however, the only clear case where we can distinguish between singular and plural, it seems to me on the basis of my limited knowledge, is in *śarireṇa* (5e, 7c).[1207]

By means of this device to level the playing field, I propose not proceed with the discussion without assuming that *śarira* is being used to refer to two radically different kinds of thing, and to translate accordingly. If, as it seems, morphology does not allow us to be sure that any of the references to *śarira* or even *dhatu* are in the plural, and therefore to apply the easiest benchmark for distinguishing between living bodies or corpses and a relic or relics, then the only warrant we really have for artificially introducing a distinction in terminology between e.g. "relic" and "body" into the translation is our own assumptions about what it is *a priori* doctrinally likely the text is saying. I do not believe our assumptions are necessarily a reliable guide in this case. The concept (surprising, e.g. to von Hinüber) of the *dharma* realised by the Buddha somehow infusing the relics, found at the end of the inscription, shows us, first, that we

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1205 Salomon and Fussman differ.

1206 Salomon and Fussman differ.

1207 If this last reason is to be relevant, of course, we must presume that *śarira* in 5d-e and 7c has the same referent as the other instance of the word to mean "relic" (3b); the question of whether or not it does will occupy us in the discussion immediately following.

cannot necessarily be sure the ideas behind the inscription will conform to our expectations, and more specifically, that it is prepared to entertain overlaps between categories that secondary literature has arguably treated as too hard-and-fast and inviolable.

We have no way of knowing, therefore, that the text does not speak of the same *śarira*-cum-*dhatu* throughout, and indeed, it is arguable that the arresting mention of *vajra* ("adamant",[1208] 5d), when the text describes the Buddha's "final body" as a "mass of adamant" in particular, argues that for such a reading.

The text is seems (fairly!) clearly to be speaking of the body of the Buddha in his final lifetime (Skt. **antimaśarīra*[1209]). Yet, to speak of anything as adamantine is to speak of it as indestructible, whereas the stereotypical view of the fate of the Buddha's last body is that it "broke up", i.e. was destroyed, upon his death. Relics, on the other hand, are frequently spoken of as being as indestructible as *vajra,* or otherwise associated with *vajra* in various ways. It must be acknowledged that this claim, as so much with the Senavarma Inscription, necessarily involves us in drawing upon evidence which is strictly anachronistic, since, as we will see, this inscription is the earliest instance known to me of the association between any body of the Buddha and adamant, let alone between relics and adamant.[1210] Nonetheless, as we will see in

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[1208] On my choice of the word "adamant" to translate *vajra* in this dissertation, and associated translation practices, see n. 2237.

[1209] Fussman notes that this term is unattested in Sanskrit, 22. Von Hinüber, however, notes that in "Theravāda Buddhism" the term usually refers to the Buddha's final earthly incarnation, though he does not note the apparent contradictions that would be entailed by the description of such a body as adamantine; see above n. 1186.

[1210] The earliest association between *vajra* and relics, apart from the present uncertain instance, seems to be the tradition that the Buddha creates his relics somehow by entering into the *vajrôpamāsamādhi.* The earliest such reference is perhaps in Mātṛceta, whom Bailey assigns to the first to third century CE. He describes the *parinirvāṇa* of the Buddha in part by saying, "Powdering your bones into tiny particles with the diamond of *samādhi,* you did not even at the end give up your habit of performing arduous works" (*yas tvaṃa samādhivajreṇa tilaśo 'sthīni cūrṇayan/ atiduṣkarakārtvam ante 'pi na vimuktavān*), Bailey 143, cited

greater detail later in this dissertation,[1211] when, in subsequent periods of development in doctrines of Buddha-bodies, other bodies of the Buddha were spoken of in the same terms of association with adamant, it was always some special, ideal body of the Buddha that was so named, especially the *dharmakāya*. Indeed, we would expect no less almost by definition, in terms of the same logic I have just mentioned – to speak of a body as adamantine is to conceive of it in ideal terms, as exempt from the usual conditions of corruptibility and fallibility that make the given, ordinary body so inadequate, and it would scarcely be coherent to speak precisely of the Buddha's final *fleshly* body in such terms.

In other words, where we would expect the characterisation of a *śarīra* as somehow adamantine to usually apply to relics, here it clearly (also?) applies to the Buddha's final body, and the only reasonable conclusion, it seems to me, is that the text understands the relics as *still* substantially the same thing as that final body.

Skilling 293. MPPŚ says that when the Buddha enters into Parinirvāṇa, he first entrusts his Dharma to Maitreya, Kāśyapa and Ānanda, and then "finally he enters into the concentration like adamant (*varjôpamasamādhi*) and fragments the bones of his body into tiny pieces the size of mustard seeds" 將滅度時以法身。與彌勒菩薩摩訶[7]薩迦葉阿難等。然後入金剛三昧。自碎身骨令如芥子 T1509.173c01-03, Lamotte, *Traité* II, 938-940, cited Skilling 293. So too Kumārajīva's *Prajñāpāramitā*: 世尊。佛見是福利衆生故。入金剛三昧中。碎金剛身作末舍利。何以故。有人佛滅度後。供養佛舍利乃至如芥子許。其福報無邊乃至盡苦, T223.293b06-10; in Zhu Fonian, 爾時世尊欲入金剛三昧。碎身舍利 T384.1015b05-06. Jñānabhadra's (late, i.e. Tang) version of the MPNS goes further, and describes this event in terms of the Buddha breaking up *his vajra body* into tiny *śarīra*; 爾時世尊大悲力故。碎金剛體成末舍利 T377.910c27; subsequent to this, so that we know the term *sheli* certainly refers to relics, a king who was not present at the *parinirvāṇa* expresses the wish to pay homage to the relics by saying simply "I want to enter the city and worship the *vajra-śarīra* of the Tathāgata 我欲入城禮拜如來金剛舍利 T377.911c07-08. Relics are further directly described as like adamant (and gold) in the textual record as early as the MPPŚ, which describes the Buddha's entry into the *vajra*-like *samādhi* to create his relics at *parinirvāṇa* as also entailing the "destruction of his *vajrakāya* into minute *śarīra* 入金剛三昧中。碎金剛身作末舍利, T1509.480a24-25. Guṇabhadra's LAS: 如金金剛佛舍利。得奇特性終不損壞, T670.512b19; the verses, too, speak of "the *vajra*[-like?] Buddha relics" 金剛佛舍利, T670.512c27 (the verse line only is also in Bodhiruci's version, T671.560b8; both passages are echoed by Śikṣānanda, T672.621c15, T672.622a24). Of course, the current inscriptional passage is much earlier, which may either mean that it is an exciting find, or that I am off-beam in reading this concept into it. Finally, we might note that John Strong recounts various narratives of the indestructible nature of relics, and then says, "This is in line with the adamantine nature of buddhahood," 183.

[1211] See §5.1.4, p. 1081 ff.

This aspect of the text can only be clear in our discussion if we use the same term for both the Buddha's final earthly body and the relics, as the inscription clearly does. Although it will make for ugly English, therefore, I will adopt the convention of translating *śarira* in every case as "relic/body (*śarira*)" or "body/relic (*śarira*)", with the order of the alternatives depending upon the facet of the term that seems to the fore in each case. *Dhatu/dhadu* I will leave as "relic", since it does not have this ambiguity with the word "body". (*Dhātu* is ambiguous, of course, in its own way, and we will consider the ambiguity of this term below when we return to the second key passage in which it features so pivotally.)

With these points in mind, I propose that we understand the passage as follows. I have rearranged word order in order to place together elements that Salomon interprets as syntactically part of the same clause. I have included line numbers to allow for easy identification of the original location of each element in the inscription, but formatted with each large clause separate, in order to make the overall structure of this rambling passage clearer.

Beginning at 5d, I thus see six main elements in the sentence, which I number in their order of appearance in my translation: (i) the main subject-verb-object clause "I establish this relic", which is repeated twice in the original inscription in order to bear the burden of all the very elaborate subordinate clausal structure; (ii-iii) two gerund (-*tvā*/-yā) clauses describing respectively a set of bodily conditions for the Buddha's awakening, and the spiritual or gnostic essence of that awakening; the first of these, describing the bodily condition, has two component subclauses, (a) an ablative clause and (b) an instrumental clause; (iv) a nominative clause describing the Buddha as he is in the state subsequent to that awakening; (v) an

accusative clause describing the relic established (vi) (v) a genitive clause furthering the description of the Buddha.

I have preferred, in this translation, to "show my working", as they put it in setting problems in mathematics, that is, to reflect as accurately as I can my understanding of the original, including those points that remain difficult and unclear, rather than aiming for a translation "polish" that artificially glosses over problems. The result is an English that is particularly awkward and obscure, but I hope that its difficulties are at least an accurate representation of real problems in the interpretation of the inscription itself. I discuss these problems in the footnotes and immediately below.

"3b. . . . in the king's chamber, there was a relic/body (*śarira*) of the Lord . . . .

(i) 3c. [I,] Senavarma . . .4b/5c. establish this relic/element (*dhatu*) . . . of the Lord,

5d. who,

(ii) (a) due to[1212] [**tatas* i.e. in virtue of?] such a body (*atmabhava*) which is a collection of *vajra* and a final body/relic (*śarira*),

(b) 5e. having based [himself] with[1213] [that] last body/relic (*śarira*) that is disunited (*visayuya = visa(ṃ)yukta*),[1214]

(iii) 6a. [and] having completely and fully awakened to the complete and full awakening of unsurpassed awakening – 6c. [that is,] having become completely and fully realised the *dharma*, 6b. having seen the *dharma* in such a way that others could also see it in its full extent – ;

(iv) 6c. (cont.) destroyed all *saṃskāras;* 6d. was freed from all fear, birth, old age, and death; 6e accomplished the destruction of bad rebirth,[1215] 6f. and destroyed all birth, age and death;

[1212] Reading the ablative *-tas* endings as causative.

[1213] I choose this awkward translation to directly reflect what seems to me the awkwardness of **niśrayitvā* in combination with instrumental case. I would expect accusative.

[1214] See immediately below for discussion of this difficult word.

[1215] I have here brought forward from 6e the most clearly nominative forms, which refer to the Buddha as subject of this extremely long multipartite relative clause, in order to make it easier to understand the overall syntax.

(i) 7d. – I establish

(v) 7a. this relic (*ima dhadu*),[1216] quickened[1217] (**paribhāvita*) by virtue, 7b. quickened by concentration, wisdom, release [and?] knowledge [and?] insight,[1218] 7c. this [relic[1219], **dhātu*], [which is] in [or 'has gone to', *-*gata*] the relic/element (**dhātu*) of *nirvāṇa,* the best direction of the Tathāgata (ii) (b) by means of that [final] body/relic (*śarira*)[1220] –

(vi) 7a. [of he who] has now entered into final *nirvāṇa* (**parinirvṛta*).

I will shortly explain what I understand the inscription overall to be driving at, such that I have translated it this way. First, however, I must address a couple of points of detail.

This point in the inscription where the greatest uncertainties remain is still the pair of lines dealing with the "final body" (**paścima śarīra,* *antimaśarira*) (5d-5e), which I have translated "due to such a body (*ātmabhava*) which is a collection of *vajra* and a final body/relic, having based [himself] with [that] body/relic which is final and dissociated . . ." The problems here revolve around the words *niṣayeta* ("based"),[1221] *visayuyeṇa* ("dissociated"), and the interpretation of the two sets of endings, ablative and instrumental.

[1216] I have moved these clauses forward, before the genitives, because it seems clear to me that the genitives are describing the relic "*of* the Buddha", but it is quite unnatural in English to try and understand a genitive before its headword, "the *of the Buddha . . .* relic".

[1217] I choose this translation to try and convey the meaning Schopen suggests the word has of "animating, infusing with life".

[1218] Given that, as we saw above, later listings of the *anāsravaskandha* include *jñāna* and *vimukti* separately, but also *vimuktijñānadarśana* as a single item, and given that in other inscriptions we sometimes only get one or another subset of the list, it seems to me we have no *a priori* way here of knowing whether we are dealing with one, two or three items.

[1219] Resuming *dhadu* from 7a.

[1220] I read this word as resuming the instrumental clause in 5d.

[1221] "Das Problem dieses Satzes hängt an der Bedeutung von *ṇiṣayeta,* das von F. und S. < *niśrayitvā* abgeleitet wird. Dies is zwar naheliegend, doch wird *niśrayitvā* nur mid dem Akkusativ verbunden. Es bleibt also dunkel, was der Buddha vor (?) der Erleuchtung mit dem von letzten Körper getrennten 'Reliquienkörper'(?) gemacht hat;" von Hinüber, *Beiträge* 25.

Niṣayeta = *niśrayitvā* would normally mean "having depended upon", i.e. "on the basis of" etc. But we would normally also expect it to take an accusative case,[1222] and we seem to find none here, so we do not know what the Buddha "depended on" or "took as his basis". The most plausible reading, it seems to me, is that he depended upon *the fact or state* of what is described in this entire gerund clause, with this notion being implicit. The only other alternative would be to construe this verb with the instrumental, and somehow understand that the "final body" (**paścimeṇa śarīreṇa*) is what was depended upon, but I suspect this would do violence to the usual constraints of the idiomatic applications of syntax.

Visayuya = **visa(ṃ)yukta* should mean something like "unyoked, detached, dissociated, uncoupled, free(d) [from]" etc. It is not clear to me what is intended by this word, in the sense that it is not clear what is dissociated or detached from what. But the readings of previous scholars, which uniformly understand this word in conjunction with the series of words in ablative *-*tas* such that the Buddha is "separated *from* . . . this last body . . . *with* his final body" seem oxymoronic: what could it mean to be separated from a body by means of that very same body? (Von Hinüber, as we have seen above, seeks to solve this problem by seeing one "final body", the *antimaśarīra,* as the Buddha's last earthly body, and the other, *paścimaśarīra,* as referring to a "body" associated with the relics. However, I have already argued above that this reading seems implausible, first, because we have no way of knowing if the traditions about a second *parinirvāṇa* of the relics were current in this period, and second, because the association of the idea of the adamant makes it incoherent that *antimaśarīra* could refer purely and simply to the Buddha's perishable final fleshly body.[1223])

[1222] As noted by von Hinüber; see n. 1221.

[1223] See n. 1186 and p. 553.

If it is thus incoherent to read **visaṃyuktena* as referring somehow to a separation of *the Buddha* from *his final body*, however, the obvious question is: What is separated or disunited from what? While I can only propose this solution very tentatively, I suggest we take our cue, once more, from the presence of the characterisation of the final body as a "mass of adamant" (**vajrasaṃghana*). If, as I have argued above, this notion argues that the body referred to is the body of the relics, then we may be able to interpret **visaṃyukta* as referring to the dissociation of the various parts of that body *from one another*. In later traditions, Buddhas were said to have two kinds of possible relics,[1224] "whole-body (*ekaghana*) relics" and "scattered/ dissociated/ broadcast" (*vaistārika*) relics,[1225] depending upon the lifespan of the Buddha in question and the time he therefore had had in the world to teach and save beings. Where this distinction is made, Śākyamuni Buddha is always said to have had the latter. It seems possible, therefore, that we have here an idiosyncratically worded[1226] reference to the same idea (in which case, once more, it would probably be the earliest such reference, and we therefore, once more, regrettably court anachronism in making this interpretation).

If **visaṃyukta* is thus not to be construed with these ablatives (in the sense of "dissociated *from* the final body . . . "), we are left with a further question: What do the ablatives mean? I propose that we read these ablatives more loosely than Salomon, that is, as vaguely causal or adverbial, such that the text is explaining that it was in some sense "because of" or "through, by means of" the final body so described that the Buddha was able to do what it subsequently says he did (realise full and complete awakening).[1227] This means that, in a loose sense, the ablative and

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[1224] Skilling, "Cutting Across Categories" 294 ff; Strong, *Relics of the Buddha* 44-47.

[1225] Skilling points out that various terms in *vi/kṛ* or *vi-pra/kṛ* are used to express this concept also.

[1226] I know of no place where *visaṃ/yuj* is otherwise used to refer to this category of relics.

[1227] This suffix is used to create "adverbials" "from noun and adjective stems of every class . . . more freely later on"; "the distinctive ablative meaning is not infrequently effaced, and the adverb has a more

instrumental clauses are, in their semantic thrust, parallel – that both are describing the final body, in its various qualities, as the condition in virtue of which awakening was realised.

Though this proposal cannot explain everything about the syntax and meaning of this clause, I believe that if we read it thus, it seems most likely that it is describing the final body of the Buddha as a condition for or at least a facet of his enlightenment, and that the transformation of that body (*śarīra*) into relics (*śarīrāṇi*) is considered the most pertinent feature of that body as such. This suggests, of course, that the reference is to the Buddha's realisation of *parinirvāṇa,* not to his realisation under the bodhi tree 45 years earlier. But this, too, in fact, is what the text says: at 7a the reference is to *parinirvāṇa,* and at 7c the text also refers to "having gone to" (or "being in", *-gata*) the *nirvāṇadhātu,* which is a term only usually used to refer to *parinirvāṇa.*[1228]

On this reading, of course, it becomes clear that the **śarīra* referred to in 5d-5e is not at all anything different from the *śarīra* enshrined in the reliquary and whose "establishment" the inscription commemorates. In fact, precisely in virtue of the insight that it is one and the same *śarīra,* we can see the entire point and relevance of 5d-5e: the inscription is explaining exactly *what* the relic is that is here enshrined, that is, what sort of a thing a relic is that it is worth making such a fuss about it.

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general value . . ." Whitney, *Sanskrit Grammar* §1098, p. 404. For instances of *–tas* in the sort of sense I am contemplating here, cf. *mukhatas* "from the mouth, by means of the mouth" etc.; *nastas* "from or into the nose", *śīrṣatas* "from or at the head or the top" etc.

[1228] Indeed, in his *Relics of the Buddha,* John Strong argues forcefully that we can read the account of the *parinirvāṇa* and its aftermath in the MPNS as primarily an account of the production of relics, and the widespread prevalence of the *parinirvāṇa* scene in reliquary iconographic programmes (a few instances of which we touched upon above) suggests strongly that relics were understood as somehow instantiating the mystery of the *parinirvāṇa,* a notion that makes perfect sense if we understand relics to have been the substance in which the absented Buddha was nonetheless fully present.

If we interpret *śarīra* in this manner, we are also able to make better sense of the surrounding text. Here, we can profitably make reference once more to the second, latter key passage already examined above (11e-12d), describing the interfusion of the *dharma* in the relic. As there, in the current passage, too, in addition to this description of the *śarīra* itself as a condition for or facet of the Buddha's realisation, we also have reference to the *dharma* he realised (6b-6c). Moreover, this reference is expressed in a gerund clause that parallels the gerund clause about the body. This parallelism suggests that these two transformations, one of body and one of gnosis, were parallel arms of a single transformative process that produced the remarkable being (my §iv and vi) whose relic this is that is presently enshrined: the Buddha's very buddhahood, that is to say, is understood as entailing the realisation not just of a perfect gnostic relation to truth, but also the realisation of an adamantine corporeal perfection that ultimately eventuates in the production of the relics. Immediately thereafter, moreover, as if to further emphasise and cement the mysterious identity between these two dimensions, gnostic and corporeal, of the Buddha's post-(*pari-*)*nirvāṇa* state, we get the formula describing *the relics* as "quickened" (**paribhāvita*) by the virtues of the Buddha.

This brings us to the problematic line 7c, which I think is probably the other largest sticking point in this passage: *ime śarireṇa tadagadapravadiśaṇivaṇadhatugade* = **imāḥ śarīreṇa tathāgata*pravadiśa*nirvāṇadhātugatās,*[1229] which I have translated, "this [relic], [which is] in the element (**dhātu*) of *nirvāṇa,* the best direction of the Tathāgata, by means of that [final] body/relic (*śarira*)."

[1229] Given that von Hinüber suggests the singular instrumental Skt. equivalent *śarīreṇa* for *śarirena,* I cannot understand exactly how he interprets it in his translation, "diese, *die* also *Körper*, in die beste (?) Himmelsrichtung des Tathāgata, in das Nirvāṇa gelangt sind"; *Beiträge* 24. Both Salomon and Fussman seem at a loss to understand the word: Salomon 278, Fussman 25.

The first point of relevance for us here is thus *śarireṇa,* which sticks out like a sore thumb in its immediately context, as an isolated instrumental of which we can make no sense. I read this as a reference back to the instrumental subclause in 5e, that is, as a kind of reminder of that dimension of the overall picture that is being painted here: as if to say, "this relic, which is – in virtue of its being *that kind of body,* let us recall – in the element of *nirvāṇa*". This is what I have tried to convey by translating "by means of that *final* body". If we recall that 5d-5e, on my reading, presented the attainment of the adamantine final body-cum-relics as the corporeal match to the gnostic condition of buddhahood of 6a-6c, then we can see here, I believe, that the text reiterates that understanding as part of its final summation of the meaning of the relic it formulaically enshrines.

The second point I would like to draw attention to is the hitherto unnoticed fact that the word *dhātu* in **nirvāṇadhātu* here is the same word *dhātu* that is used several times in the inscription to refer to the relic (5c, 7a, 12b). Here, at least, we can return to the later key passage from the inscription, with which we began. Recall that when we dealt with that second part of the inscription, above, I postponed consideration of the phrase "undying *nirvāṇadhātu*" until we had in hand the interpretation of this earlier passage, promising to return to it. Now I can make good on that promise. I contend that it is most plausible to understand that in both passages, the inscription is deliberately exploiting the ambiguity of the term *dhātu* to refer *both* to the *nirvāṇadhātu* and to the *dhātu* as relic, and that this is a further part of the same pattern we have been tracing above of claiming an identity between the Buddha's attainment and the physical substance of the relic itself.

Neither Fussman nor Salomon noticed, perhaps understandably enough in the context of an inscription that is primarily treating of a relic (*dhātu*), that if any meaning was to be attributed

to the idea of an **amṛtadhātu* on the basis of textual parallels, we would ordinarily think first of the "deathless element" (Pāli *amatadhātu*) "touched with the body". Conversely, this association did not escape the gimlet eye of von Hinüber,[1230] but the association the phrase has in canonical passages leads him to think it impossible that *dhātu* here refers to the relic at all, against the readings of Fussman and Salomon: in his words, "How could Nirvāṇa enter into a relic?"[1231]

We have seen elsewhere in this study that the canonical formula "touch the deathless element with the body", whose distribution in the Pāli canon we surveyed, in the section above where we studied the notion of the undying more generally,[1232] is a description of the ideal of religious attainment. In such contexts, however, the word *dhātu* would ordinarily be understood as carrying a much more abstract meaning: "element", "realm", "sphere" etc. The same presuppositions would normally attend the notion of a *nirvāṇadhātu,* which would explain why neither Fussman nor Salomon translate "relic" in 7c,[1233] and why von Hinüber would be so incredulous that the phrase could here be applied to the relic in 12b.

Indeed, it is clear that in the later **amṛtadhātu* passage at 12b, there are also echoes of the notion of *nibbānadhātu,* as von Hinüber so clearly realises. The relevant portion of the inscription, we recall, says, "The *dharma* which was completely realised by the worthy Śākyamuni . . . . may it rest in that immortal relic (**amṛte dhātau*)*;* where shall be the end and

[1230] *Beiträge* 38.

[1231] Already cited above; see n. 1178.

[1232] See p. 260 ff.

[1233] Though Fussman comes closer to seeing here an identity between the relics and *nirvāṇadhātu*: "qui sont des éléments de *nirvāṇa*", 8.

completion of this beginningless and restless *saṃsāra*, *where all of these feelings will become cooled*" etc. (*yatra imaṇa vedaïdaṇa sarve śidalibhaviśati*, my emphasis). The formula "all that is sensed right here, being not rejoiced in, will become cold" (*idheva sabbavedayitāni anabhinanditāni sīti bhavissanti*) is consistently used elsewhere in the canon to refer to the moment of the "breakup of the body", i.e. physical death, for someone completely liberated and destined for no future rebirth.[1234]

Further, as we saw in the Appendix to Chapter 3 of this dissertation,[1235] the concept of the *nibbānadhātu* seems to be a part of a complex mix of elements contributing to the gradual shift in meaning of the concept of *saupādisesa* "with remainder", such that it was paired with *anupādisesa* "without remainder", and the two together came to refer to kinds of *nirvāṇadhātu* (P. *nibbānadhātu*) that were understood in terms of their corporeal ramifications. As I suggested there, the first context in which the notion of *nibbānadhātu* is widely used is in the formulaic description of the attainment of *parinirvāṇa* "attaining complete extinction in the Nibbāna-element without remainder" (*anupādisesāya nibbānadhātuyā parinibbāyati*). I also showed that *Itivuttaka* 44 is the only passage in the Pāli canon in which we see any prolepsis of the dichotomy of *sopādisesa*- and *anupādiseasnibbānadhātu* in anything like the later interpretation of those terms;[1236] relevant for our purposes here is the fact that in this key passage at Iti 44, where the concept of *nibbānadhātu* seems to be in the throes of such an important shift in its meaning, the moment of final physical death of someone not destined for future rebirth, described as an entry into an *anupādisesā nibbānadhātu,* is described with the formula "all that is sensed right here, being not rejoiced in, will become cold".

[1234] For references, see n. 821. Fussman recognises that parallels exist in AK; "Inscription de Senavarma" 33.

[1235] See p. 413.

[1236] See p. 387.

Now, on the basis of this information, it might at first seem most sensible to "correct" Salomon and Fussman, as does von Hinüber, and to argue that in the passage at 12b it is a mistranslation to read "relic" for *dhātu,* so that we should read instead "the element of the undying". I suggest, however, that as was the case with **śarīra* above, it is possible that the ambiguity here, and the difficulties it has caused the epigraphists, may be significant, and that rather than treating it as a textual problem we need to "solve", we can better interpret the term *dhātu,* also, as moving almost deliberately throughout the inscription back and forth between two different facets of its meaning.

Throughout the inscription, in fact, terms like *śarīra, *antimaśarīra, *paśima śarīra, dhātu* and *nirvāṇadhātu* are arguably manipulated as part of a consistent claim that there is a fundamental identity between the relics and the most exalted categories and ideals of the Buddhist religion. The *dharma* is indeed in the relic (*dhātu*); the relic (*śarīra*) is indeed the final body (*śarīra*) of the Buddha; in other words, the corporeal transformation that ensued at the *parinirvāṇa,* which left behind multiple, scattered adamantine "bodies", was of a piece with the marvellous gnostic and moral transformation of the Buddha. The relics are therefore quickened and imbued with the full essence of that realisation and its object (the *dharma,* the pure aggregates); and the relics therefore *are* the Buddha, and not just *of* the Buddha. In short, to put my contention in the most general and polemical terms, the inscription wants to say that the relic is a full and true hierophany; in its most concrete and adamantine of material forms are fully bodied forth the most rarefied divine truths and ideals.

I said above, with some hyperbole, that in the latter part of this inscription at 11e-12d "we have encountered the first *dharma* body of the Buddha, and it is a relic". In line with this reading, I

am suggesting that we read the terms **nirvāṇadhātu* in 7c and *amṛtadhātu* in 12b as meaning referring *both* the relic and the "realm of (*pari-*)*nirvāṇa*". To put this reading in similarly hyperbolic and provocative terms, we have here also encountered the earliest *dharmadhātu,* and it is a relic too.[1237]

Returning for the present from these higher levels of generality and speculation to the epithet **tathāgatapravadiśa*(?)*nirvāṇadhātugata* in line 7c of the Senavarma Inscription, which was where we began this lengthy excursus, I would argue, on the basis of the considerations outlined above, that we should see this deliberate ambiguity at work in (*nirvāṇa-*)*dhātu.* Thus, this epithet, which both Fussman and Salomon agree modifies *ime* ("this . . . relic"[1238]) redoubles the identification of relic and realisation, declaring that the relic (*dhātu*) is situated in or gone to the realm/element (*dhātu*) of *nirvāṇa,* thus emphasising the fact that they are ultimately one and the same thing, a "*nirvāṇa*-relic/realm".

In this line, further, if we see in the word *śarireṇa* (which both Fussman and Salomon are at something of a loss to understand) an emphatic resumption of the clause about the bodily dimension of the Buddha's realisation at 5d-5e, we have in fact, just at the climactic point before Senavarma (performatively) reiterates that he establishes it, a summary, as if in a very tight textual knot, of all the various threads of meaning that the inscription wants to pack into

[1237] This interpretation opens out a possibility which it is beyond the scope of this dissertation to consider, namely, that the prevalence talk of the *dharmadhātu, nirvāṇadhātu* and so on in early Mahāyāna may, as I will contend later in this dissertation for *dharmakāya,* be in part a reaction to the prestige and power of the cult of relics – another attempt to appropriate relic-language and reinscribe it with the values of various Mahāyāna doctrinal systems and their own absolutes and ideals. The exploration of this possibility, and perhaps of other hitherto unobserved dimensions in which core Mahāyāna terminology may bear the traces of origins in polemics against the relic cult or other systems of belief and practice, would surely present a worthy object of future research.

[1238] Translating in singular in accordance with the hypothesis I proposed for my experimental reading above.

the relic. *This* is the kind of relic Senavarma establishes – that relic that is identical to the marvellous body (*śarīra*) in which and by means of which the Buddha attained his realisation, that element (*dhātu*) produced by or entered into at the *parinirvāṇa,* which is a "*nirvāṇa* element", in which the *dharma* itself, in all its complex wonder, inheres.

This is the interpretation I have tried, not so much to convey, as to allow room for, in the alternative translation I propose of the key passage at p. 556 above.

I would now like to summarise what I believe to be the least we can securely take from the inscription for the purpose to hand, that is, for the examination of the question of how relics were viewed in the period to which the inscription attests (the early first century C.E.). Most specifically, what does the inscription tell us about the extent to which we can be confident that relics were understood as a kind of body? Even if we are relatively conservative, I believe we can still carry away a good deal of information from the scrutiny of this inscription.

The Senavarma Inscription, as we have seen, like other inscriptions of the same period, speaks of the relics as quickened by or suffused with (*paribhāvita*) the five pure aggregates. In contexts quite soon after the time of this inscription, at the latest, these five pure aggregates are regarded in and of themselves as an ideal embodiment of the Buddha (Lokakṣema's *Aṣṭa*), or as the Buddha's *dharmakāya* (Sarvâstivāda). Further, they are elsewhere clearly treated as something which in some sense is understood to survive the *parinirvāṇa* of an arhat, which we would expect to include the Buddha (*Mūlasarvâstivādavinaya*). I contended above, in §4.1.1, that relics are certainly understood as bodies of the Buddha through large swathes of the later tradition. I contend here that the ascription to relics of animation by the five pure aggregates

in Senavarma and other Kharoṣṭhī inscriptions means that relics are already regarded as veritable bodies of the Buddha in this period.

This means that relics are the earliest kind of body to which this rubric is applied, and also that the Senavarma inscription is one of the earliest contexts in which we see that application. In short, it seems that at the very least, the Senavarma inscription provides us with strong evidence that relics were understood in the same terms as bodies, in these several respects, by the beginning of the millennium.

Relics are also spoken of in the inscription, as elsewhere, as *śarīra,* that is, as if they are bodies; and, very close in the same context, the same term is used to speak of the final body of the Buddha, which at the least creates a significant ambiguity about whether the term refers to relics only or also to some other kind of embodiment. The application of the conceit of being somehow like *vajra* to this last body of the Buddha increases this ambiguity, and makes it difficult to argue an entirely modern-rationalistic reading, on which that body is merely the flesh and blood body of the Buddha as an ordinary historical human being. Clearly it is in some significant sense a *special* body, and however we interpret the syntactic difficulties of lines 5d-5e, it seems clear that this special body in some sense plays a key role in the realisation of the Buddha. Thus, relics are here associated with another special embodiment of the Buddha, in the sense that they are closely related to, if not identified with, his last earthly body, described in terms that make it clear that it was no ordinary body.

In addition, relics are spoken of in the Senavarma Inscription as having the *dharma* in them, and that in this exact context the *dharma* is moreover described in elaborate terms that leaves little doubt that it is the *dharma* in the most exalted and absolute of senses. This attribution of

infusion by *dharma* to relics gives us further reason to understand that the relics are here understood as veritable bodies of the Buddha.

The inscription also speaks of the relics as *dhātu,* and the term *dhātu,* also, is riven by important ambiguities, so that it seems at one and the same time to refer to the relics and to the "undying element" (*amṛtadhātu*) or the "realm of *nirvāṇa*" in whose terms the Buddha's attainment is also conceived. I have interpreted this term *dhātu* as another part of the consistent pattern in the inscription of identifying relics and religious ideals, in a manner that may seem paradoxical to modern interpreters. It is thus another reason for thinking that the relics are understood, in the Senavarma Inscription, to truly embody the Buddha and the religious ideal he attains in order definitionally to become *buddha,* and thus constitutes further support for the understanding that relics are here regarded as veritable embodiments of the Buddha.

Finally, we have also noted in passing that the Senavarma Inscription comprises our earliest hints at two other themes that were ultimately to become major themes in the doctrine of the Buddha's embodiments: the claim that his body is like or of adamant, and the actual immortality of the Buddha. The inscription says outright that his "final body" (*antimaśarīra*) is a "mass of adamant" (**vajrasaṃghana*), and constitutes the earliest instance of this association between *vajra* and the Buddha's body that I have been able to find. The inference that the Buddha is in fact immortal is more indirect, but is hinted at insofar as the later evidence of the MSV seems to show that the five pure aggregates were a form in which liberated beings were held to somehow survive death, and insofar as the notion that the relics are a veritable body implies that the being embodied, i.e. the Buddha, is still truly present in that body, that is, as Schopen understands, alive. In both these related respects, the Senavarma Inscription is a

watershed text in the history of doctrines of the Buddha's embodiment, and we will return to it when we take up these threads in Chapter 5.1 of this dissertation.

As a brief postscript to this consideration of relics as a body of the Buddha in the Kharoṣṭhī inscriptions, we might finally mention the "Dédicace de Ramaka" studied by Fussman, which dates to approx. 16 C.E. (year 74 of the Azès era). This inscription specifically mentions relics twice (l. 6 and 13), and is of special interest because it associates the relics with a formula expressing the realisation of the Dharma not met with elsewhere, to my knowledge. Fussman translates, "For what sole reason are these relics established? For the cessation of production (of suffering), for the realisation of the path, for the destruction of [the] flavour and [of?] pride, and for the (destruction) of suffering and evil."[1239] This is if interest because, like the association of the establishment of relics with the declaration of the *pratītyasamutpāda* or the assertion that the relics are "quickened" by the five *anāsravaskandha,* it seems to imply that relics instantiate or effect the realisation of the highest ideals of the Dharma, though here in a manner not matched elsewhere.

4.1.3 Against an excessive delicacy in secondary literature about the presence of the Buddha

In his impressively learned and typically engaging recent book *Relics of the Buddha,* John Strong provides a useful summary of the various interpretations that scholars have offered for Buddhist relics.[1240] As he notes, relics have been understood variously as "indexical icons", "sedimentations of charisma", "zero signifiers", "chronotopes", "heterotopias", "places where absence is present", a "visible representation of the immortal nirvana state" that reconciles the

[1239] Fussman, "Nouvelles inscriptions Śaka" 6-7: *iya larira*[=**śarīra*]*pratiṭhavaṇa ki*[*ṃ?*] *matrae bhodu saumdayapraṇae mahabhagaṇae* [*mu*?]*ṇorasakṣae dikhata*[*h*]*iae*.

[1240] Strong, *Relics of the Buddha* 4-5. I will not repeat the references Strong gives for each of these views here: interested readers are referred to his work.

intellectual knowledge that the Buddha is dead and the affective conviction that he is living, "memory sites" that are "the ultimate embodiment of a commemorative consciousness", "metamorphoses of the double", "instruments of magical power [and] kernels of pure *imaginaire*", "euphemization", "hierophanies", and "blazing absences". To this list we can now add Strong's own contention, which is perhaps the central thesis of his book, that relics are "expressions and extensions of the Buddha's biographical process".[1241]

It is very striking that the notion of the body plays such a small role in the way that secondary scholars in the field to date have understood them. Strong only mentions two characterisations that are corporeal at all: for Steven Collins, relics are "embodiments of the sense of an ending",[1242] and Yael Bentor reports that Tibetan analyses classify relics as "particular forms of emanation-bodies".[1243] Even here, however, the sense in which Collins speaks of "embodiment" is surely quite figurative and attenuated, and Bentor is merely reporting an emic categorisation, which is not really the product of her own analysis. We could certainly add to this some limited flashes of recognition, scattered throughout the literature, that there are various relations and tensions between relics and the *dharmakāya* in particular, many of which we have noted in passing above. In no case, however, does any of those scholars generalise the insight and speak of relics in general or in their central nature and function as bodies of the Buddha.

In light of the evidence we have surveyed in the current section of this dissertation, it seems that, in a sense, the field has been too clever for its own good. While there are many useful

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[1241] Strong, *Relics of the Buddha* 5.

[1242] Citing "*Nirvāṇa,* Time and Narrative" 233.

[1243] Citing Bentor, "Tibetan Relic Classification".

insights to be had from some if not all of the interpretations of relics represented in Strong's list, it also reads like a litany of what we might call "hyper-etic" contrivances that strain for involuted conceptual sophistication, and as a consequence, miss the elephant in the room – the fact that all over the range of emic discourse and practice, at a level which surely calls for only the very minimum of etic organisation and analysis for its overt identification, relics are spoken of, spoken about, thought about, and treated as either commensurable with, commutable with, identical to, or in tension with other bodies of the Buddha.

There are a couple of possible reasons that this dimension of ideas and practices pertaining to relics has been overlooked to date, it seems to me.

The idea that a relic is seriously considered to be a body of the Buddha is admittedly a somewhat baffling concept on the face of it. How can a little round bead be the body of the Buddha? Somehow, we are more comfortable even with the idea that the Buddha might have abstract, invisible, intangible or "imaginary" bodies. On reflection, however, I see no *a priori* reason why it should be less problematic for the Buddha to be embodied in an eighteen-foot high golden body with a tongue the size of the universe, than for him to be embodied in a bit of stuff in a bowl. Indeed, as I mentioned above and as I will argue more fully presently, there may even be no *a prior* reason that the idea that the Buddha was embodied in a flesh-and-blood human body during his last earthly lifetime should be less problematic than the idea of his embodiment in a relic.

I suspect that the conceptual difficulty we feel in the fact of the idea of the Buddha embodied in a material thing is, on one level, merely one instance among many of the general discomfort occasioned by the notion of sacred objects, especially unfamiliar ones – a problematic usefully

encapsulated in Mircea Eliade's notion of "hierophany", the ignoble history of modern attempts to come to grips with the sacred objects of other cultures embodied in a term like "fetish", and so on.

This conceptual difficulty may also be a sign of deep-seated conceptual difficulties that inhere in the category of "body" or "embodiment" *per se,* which, however, due to the apparent naturalness of this category, we normally overlook in the case of our "birth bodies", and quite often for any purported body that at least assumes a similar form, and which therefore only emerge in full force when we are confronted, as here, with kinds of alleged "body" that are particularly unfamiliar.

If it is understandable, then, that the counterintuitiveness of the notion of a relic as a full-blown "body" has prevented scholars from seeing or considering this dimension of Buddhist relics to date, it will not therefore do to continue in this approach. If we allow this initial conceptual difficulty to obstruct us from even considering the body as a Buddha, however, we allow our lack of imagination about possible answers to foreclose the very question.

On the other hand, it could also be that the idea that relics are bodies has been obvious to some people, but has struck them as not sufficiently productive of insight. Perhaps, considering the conceptual and neologistic gymnastics of some of the characterisations of relics listed by Strong, scholars who prefer such analyses might find the notion that a relic is a body is too shallow, too naive – even "too emic" – to really tell us anything. I would argue, however, that this, too, if it is a reason people have refrained from analysing relics in terms of bodies, is not reason enough, and that it has led us to overlook a very significant dimension of both the relic cult and also the history of ideas about bodies of the Buddha. Whatever the reasons might be

for the neglect of this aspect of ideas and practices about relics in Buddhist Studies to date, it seems to me that perhaps one of the most general things we can say about relics from this nearly-emic perspective is indeed that they themselves *are* bodies of the Buddha, and from quite early in the tradition.

To summarise, in this section of the present dissertation, we have seen the following reasons to think that relics were broadly understood as bodies:

- they are called "bodies", not only in one of the two most important terms used to refer to them, *śarīrāṇi* (the other being *dhātu*), but also in texts that apply other ordinary words for body to them, like *ātmabhāva, vigraha,* Chinese *shen* 身, and so on;

- they are spoken of in terms that are entirely consonant with the notion of body, and which indeed we would arguably be hard pressed to understand in any sense other than a proper notion of "body", as when e.g. the redactors of Nāgārjunikoṇḍa inscriptions speak of the Tathāgata "enclosed within" the relic;

- they are further frequently spoken of in exactly the same terms as other kinds of Buddha bodies, as most importantly in the application of the rubric of the five "pure aggregates (*anāsravaskandha*) to relics in early inscriptions and to the *dharmakāya* in Sarvâstivāda scholasticism; in the application of formulae like "he who sees X sees the Buddha", which is also applied to the *dharma,* the *dharmakāya,* and to *pratītyasamutpāda,* which is frequently identified with *dharmatā*; in parallelisms between the 84,000 Aśokan *stūpas* and the 84,000 teachings;

- they are said to be alive, as Schopen argues, at least in the sense that killing them is a capital offence, and equated with the "true death" of the person whose relics they are;

- the Buddha is in several senses "present" in the relics, and relics thus arguably "body forth" the Buddha: relics are spoken of and treated as if they are simply identical with the Buddha; burial *ad sanctos* is observed for reliquary *stūpas* as well as *caitya* pilgrimage monuments as early as Sañci in the first century B.C.E.; and the Buddha was a regular resident of all monasteries, with his own living chamber containing his image (which I speculate probably usually was "quickened" by a relic) from around the fifth century C.E.;

- relics are functionally equivalent to the living Buddha as recipients of offerings and objects of worship, that is, as what is often referred to as a "field of merit";

- relics are functionally equivalent to the living Buddha in that they can perform miracles;

- relics are functionally equivalent to the Buddha in that they (i.e. their reliquary *stūpas*) can hold property, and objects associated with them in turn become "relics of use" just as with objects associated with the Buddha in life;

- relics are in some cases mutually commutable with other bodies of the Buddha, as when relics transform into a giant *buddhakāya* at their own final *parinirvāṇa* and utter a sermon; when the *dharma* is broadly and regularly treated as itself a relic, especially from approx. the sixth century; and where, in traditions apparently deriving from

Tantric ideas originating around the eighth century, the *dharmakāya* is in various forms also enshrined as a relic.

- dimensions of the Buddha's person and realisation, including most frequently the five pure aggregates but also the Dharma and even perhaps *nirvāṇa,* are said to infuse the relics from as early as the turn of the Common Era.

A final piece of evidence that relics were understood as bodies, probably even earlier than the time of the emergence of the concept of the *dharmakāya* or any other evidence of conceptions of special, positive and adequate bodies of the Buddha *per se,* is that, as I will argue below, the emergence of the *dharmakāya* (and with it, the genesis of the whole manifold of *buddhakāya* ideology) is best understood as in significant part a response to or appropriation of relic-related practice and discourse. I consider this a most significant piece of evidence, since it shows not just that relics were understood as bodies, but that much was at stake in that conception – enough to help drive a very significant ferment in Buddhist ideas and practices. I have necessarily left full consideration of this dimension of the corporeal nature of relics out of account in this chapter, however, since we do not yet have the necessary evidence before us, and to present it at this point in my argument would have involved a disruptive break with my basic chronological plan of exposition.

As I stated in the introduction to this dissertation,[1244] then, I contend that the concept of "body" is most reasonably and naturally interpreted as referring to a form somehow physical or tangible within the world, which is animated by a volitional sentient being, that is, in which such a being is "present" (meaning exactly "made tangible or accessible to other sentient

[1244] See §1.3.4.

beings within the world), and by means of which the being embodied can carry out volitional acts within the world. The survey of Buddhist ideas about relics shows that they answer perfectly well to this definition. They are certainly tangible, since, in their material dimension at least, they are fully-fledged, ordinary material objects. They are certainly animated: they are spoken of as having "life-breath" or "quickened" by the Buddha's virtues. They are certainly volitional: for instance, they cannot be stolen because nothing happens to them that they do not will, having the power to prevent anything against their wishes. We have seen that there are several reasons for thinking that the Buddha is understood to be "present" in them, in the sense intended here. Finally, they are certainly a medium by which the Buddha continues to act in the world, and indeed that is in a sense their entire purpose: the perform miracles, they "give and receive *darśan*", and they accept offerings and worship. (Indeed, in a sense, the entire epic tales of the vicissitudes of relics chronicled by the recent major works of John Strong and Kevin Trainor on the subject could be understood as an entire genre of literary "Acts of the Relics".) To top it all off, relics are also *called* "bodies".

It seems to me, then, that if we are to deny relics the status of a body of the Buddha, we will have to deny that status to all candidates for the position (with the possible exception of his "natural", historical, physical body, which would not get us very far), and we will be left with nothing to study at all. If, on the other hand, we *are* to study the history of Buddhist ideas about bodies, then it is only consistent to incorporate relics into the picture. Once we do this, as we have begun to see in this section of this dissertation, the overall picture changes quite dramatically as a result.

This interpretation of relics as bodies of the Buddha falls broadly in line with the previous, arguably less developed or specific notion that relics are understood to "presence" the Buddha.

I observed above, in discussing this aspect of relics and previous scholarly work on them, that the idea of "presence" is troubling to some scholars, and that with some justification in the larger context of well-known Buddhist ideas about the existential and ontological status of the Tathāgata, etc. Here, then, where I am presenting in its fullest form my contention that relics are indeed bodies, it seems appropriate to confront this problem of presence, and to lay out the reasons that I insist that a reading of relics as bodies and therefore as entailing the full presence of the Buddha is emically accurate, despite the fact that I, too, recognise the potential difficulties with such a position.

Another glance over brief list of characterisations of relics cited from Strong above shows, I believe, that a significant number of them are constructed (whether deliberately or otherwise) so as to pussyfoot too delicately around the embarrassing problem of presence.

This is certainly true with all the characterisations that view relics, in one way or another, as representations or signs: "indexical icons", "zero signifiers", a "visible representation of the immortal nirvana state", and Strong's own "expressions and extensions of the Buddha's biographical process". To speak of signs, especially in a post-Saussurian and post-Derridean context, is certainly not to speak of presence, but rather usually connotes a knowing, "etic"[1245] awareness not only of the radical difference between signifier and signification, the conceit of *re*-"presentation" and actual presence, etc., but also, in the hands of the sophisticated, the radical and eternally deferred difference of the signifier from itself made so famous by Derrida. This whole vocabulary, therefore, intrinsically opposes itself to any understanding of relics as fully presencing the Buddha.

[1245] This word is particularly apt here given its derivation: it was coined by K. L. Pike from "*phon*-etic", that is to say, it is a term that emerges ultimately from linguistics and more broadly from the context of structuralism. See OED, s.v. "etic".

The notion of presence is also arguably held at arm's length or circumvented in the several characterisations that emphasis the mental work of human believers in the construction or reception of relics: relics are "*memory* sites" and "the ultimate embodiment of a commemorative *consciousness*", "kernels of pure *imaginaire*", or (perhaps only marginally falling in this category) "sedimentations of charisma" (i.e. a function of *belief*). Once more, these characterisations clearly open up an etic distance between any notion of presence and the analytic perspective; naïve adherents of the tradition might *think* they are presencing an absent ideal, but our terms know that any such presencing is realised primarily in their heads.

Finally, there are several characterisations that confront the problem of absence and presence head-on and attempt to resolve it or celebrate it by means of paradox: "places where absence is present", "blazing absences", and perhaps also "zero signifiers".

The remaining characterisations seem to have little bearing on the problem of presence or absence. Even then, however, it is quite notable that none speaks simply and clearly in terms of presence, despite the fact that it is such a strong thread in the emic understanding of relics, any more than any of the secondary characterisations speaks clearly and strongly about relics as bodies. Between these various strategies, then, it seems that most of the field is either indifferent to the problem of presence at best, or downright leery of it.

Given that my characterisation of relics as bodies, as I said, clearly falls in line with an understanding of the Buddha as present in relics, I expect I must account for my difference with so much of the field on this point if my characterisation is to stand. A handy way to do this, it seems to me, is to explain my reasons for favouring the reading of relics as bodies, and

therefore an interpretation in terms of fairly straightforward presencing of the Buddha, is to compare it to one representative interpretation that eschews full or simple presence.

For this purpose, I can think of no interpretation more representative than the interesting and potentially powerful interpretation advanced by John Strong in his justifiably very well-received recent *Relics of the Buddha.* Strong seems like a good foil here because his interpretation of relics as "expressions and extensions of the Buddha's biographical process" is attractive for a number of reasons; because it is clearly and persuasively articulated, and developed at great length in his recent book; and because the quality of his work leads us to expect this interpretation of relics will be influential. I should emphasise, however, that I do *not* choose Strong because I wish to imply that his interpretation of relics is particularly flawed, but on the contrary, because it is intelligent and powerful, and therefore anything but a sitting duck. I should also emphasise that my target in these criticisms is not so much Strong's thesis that relics are an "extension of the Buddha's biography" *per se,* as far as it goes. My intention is rather to criticise a set of assumptions that I think logically must inform that thesis, and the way those assumptions, if taken to their logical if usually implicit limit, conflict with or rule out interpretations in terms of full presence, including my interpretation that relics are bodies. I believe that Strong shares these assumptions with many of the interpretations listed above that shy away from the notion of presence, so that my critique will have more general applicability to the range of interpretations I take it to represent.

Strong's central thesis in this book, in which thesis I find implicit the assumptions I here wish to criticise, is as follows. Citing what seems in fact to be a relatively unusual example of the ensconcement of "biorama" golden statuettes in a stupa,[1246] Strong argues that relics are

[1246] Strong, *Relics of the Buddha* 6.

"*expressions and extensions of the biography* of the Buddha" (my emphasis).[1247] As such, Strong argues, relics are part of a larger overall pattern whereby the entire career of the Buddha, from his past as a bodhisattva to his future in the endtimes when the last vestiges of his presence in the world will fade in various regards, "exhibits the truth of [the] formula" *ye dharmā . . .* By this, Strong explains, he means that

> " . . . buddhas come into existence due to certain causes and go out of existence due to certain causes".[1248] "His relics, in so far as they are *expressions* of the Buddha's biography, are thus also *expressions* of this process. In this regard, Buddhist relics (unlike Christian relics) *do not make manifest some transcendent or immanent reality,* but retell a tale; they sum up a *biographical narrative*; they embody [*sic*!] the whole of the Buddha's coming and going, his life-and-death story; they *reiterate* both his provenance and his impermanence."[1249]

Strong quickly makes it clear that this reading of the relics as primarily narrative is designed precisely to outmanoeuvre the problem of presence:

> "It is perhaps possible to think of this as an assertion of the ongoing 'presence' of the Buddha, but it is preferable to think of it as the further development of a powerful narrative".[1250]

The way Strong dances about the problem of what the Buddha "is" here is certainly graceful and alluring, but it is also arguably based upon a set of assumptions that render it ultimately

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[1247] See also 228-229.

[1248] Strong, *Relics of the Buddha* 6-7. Elsewhere, Strong has argued that Buddhist relics are impermanent bodies where Christian relics are eternal bodies, drawing as an example on the *Manorathapūraṇī* account of the final *parinirvāṇa* of the relics themselves, in which they will be completely consumed by fire; Strong, "Buddhist Relics in Comparative Perspective" 43. Yet this claim soft-pedals too much the very strong claims that are frequently made that relics are utterly indestructible (see e.g. n. 1210); the contradictory traditions that even the relics of former Buddhas continue to exist in the time of latter Buddhas (as in the narrative Schopen cites above the Buddha displaying the "whole-body" relic of Kāśyapa in the MSV, for which see n. 1006; and so on.

[1249] What does it mean to "embody" the coming-and-going of a being without embodying, or making present, that being himself? What does it mean to "embody" the story of a being and yet not to embody the being that story is about? I can only believe that Strong means this telling word only in a loose and metaphorical, and therefore relatively meaningless, sense.

[1250] Strong, *Relics of the Buddha* 7, my emphasis. Strong further directly opposed his reading to the idea that relics "embody 'the Buddha' in the abstract" (they rather "give *expression* to particular events in his lifetime"), 233.

incoherent. Strong shows himself so wary of the language of presence, truth, reality and so on that he paints himself into a corner, in which he risks implying that the Buddha *himself is* no more than a story or narrative. This implication is concealed to some extent by the appearance that he is mounting an argument confined to relics here, but can be spelled out by considering some of the assumptions it implies and the problems they raise.

Let us consider: If it is "preferable" to think of relics in terms of narrative rather than presence, how are we to think of the flesh-and-blood body of the historical person known as Śākyamuni, that is, of the primary point of reference when we think of a living, present Buddha? Was that body, too, then, merely "an expression or extension of the biography of the Buddha", that is, a mere *story*? I do not intend this reference to the most "natural" or paradigmatic case of a personal human body to have any strong normative value for the consideration of the problematic of the Buddha's bodies as a whole. Nonetheless, it has the virtue of showing the difficulties entailed in asserting that any "full-blooded" body is best understood as a narrative, that is, as a representation or system of signs. If relics are indeed understood as bodies, then, the conception of relics as (expressions of) a narrative will lead us into similar difficulties.

Thinking of our own bodies as an example, it does marked conceptual violence to our conception of the body and our conception of a sign to claim that a body is a sign. This would entail that my body somehow "*re*-presents" me to other people, rather than making me "present" to them. We might put this differently by saying that, if my body is primarily to be understood through the category of biography, that the only difference between my life lived in it and, say, a movie or a book about me is one of artistic medium or genre. My lived experience and living consciousness would thus somehow inhere in a *story.* This would lead immediately to the question of the difference between that story and other kinds of story

which do *not* admit of such an immediate relation of identity with a human subject. To think of a body in these terms is simply incoherent, and makes nonsense of a whole raft of important categorical distinctions – direct experience versus narrative, reality versus representation or even fiction, things versus ideas.

If Strong's category of biography thus does not admit of coherent extension to the flesh-and-blood person of the historical Śākyamuni, however, this makes it clear that Strong's argument must be underlain by an implicit rationalist contrast between that flesh-and-blood body of the Buddha and the category of "extensions of his biography". The assumption, it seems, is that the flesh-and-blood person of the Buddha's last earthly existence is the paradigm case of what the Buddha "is". Such an assumption that the Buddha *was really* the historical man Śākyamuni in pre-Mauryan India, while the other dimensions of his career over many *bodhisattva* lifetimes and into the vicissitudes of his relics after his death are "just" story, may well be perfectly reasonable from the etic standpoint of our contemporary worldview. However, it is entirely without emic justification, and indeed, it seems to me that by almost any standards it is rather poor Buddhalogy.[1251]

The Buddha, as is well known, is portrayed as having discouraged the idea that his given fleshly body somehow had any special status in relation to his being *as* a Buddha (e.g. in the *Vakkali-sutta*[1252]), and when asked what he was after his awakening, is said to have refused point-blank

[1251] In using the term "Buddhalogy" here I do not mean to impugn Strong's qualifications as a *Buddhologist,* that is, as a practitioner of the modern academic discipline of Buddhist Studies, but to refer to the conceptualisation of the Buddha, buddhahood etc. within the tradition, just as Christian Theology concerns itself from a tradition-internal perspective with the conceptualisation of the nature of God. I mean, then, that the assumptions I am attempting to draw into the open are not consistent with traditional views about the very nature of a Buddha.

[1252] See §3.2.3.

to acknowledge that he was a man or any other ordinary being but (a) "*buddha*".[1253] We must be very wary, therefore, of assuming, on the basis of our own unexamined modern-scientistic assumptions about the nature of human being, that the flesh-and-blood body of the historical Buddha has any privileged status, that is to say, that it is the paradigm case of his most veritable embodiment.

What, then, about this being that the Buddha became in virtue of his awakening? If the flesh-and-blood body of the historical Buddha is not the paradigmatic form in which he/it was/is embodied, we are entitled to ask further of Strong's argument: What is? In what form is the Buddha genuinely made present in the world and to other sentient beings? In what form does the Buddha live and experience the reality of *his own* buddhahood? By what means or medium does the Buddha act in the world in order to teach and save sentient beings?

Strong may still choose, of course, to answer that it is precisely and only the flesh-and-blood body of the historical Buddha that fulfils these functions, and that it is therefore the paradigmatic or "true" body of the Buddha, but we should be clear: in so doing he will be pitting his etic understanding squarely *against* much of the emic discourse on these questions. For the purposes of argument, however, let us assume that a hypothetical advocate of the "biography" thesis of relics accepts that, for much of the tradition, including key Pāli-canonical texts, the Buddha's flesh-and-blood body, that is, his form as a man, is *not* the truest or most paradigmatic form in which he is embodied *qua buddha*. Various other candidates then present themselves for this status – the teaching ("He who sees the *dhamma,* Vakkali, sees me . . . "), the reality summed up in the doctrine of *pratītyasamutpāda*, etc. What are we then to say of whichever form of embodiment we do choose to treat as paradigmatic? Is the Dharma*,* or

[1253] *Dona-sutta* AN IV.36.

pratītyasamutpāda, or whatever, as an embodiment of the Buddha, also an "expression and extension of the Buddha's biography"?

Regardless of the form in which we may wish to claim the Buddha is most authentically embodied for the Buddha, I contend that it will never be satisfactory, or coherent, to conceive of it as a biography, that is, as a kind of narrative or story. In all cases, we are confronted with the same problem that would face us when considering the incoherent idea that the body of the living human person might be an "expression of their biography", namely, that this category does not really do justice to all of what we mean when we consider the person to be authentically present in a certain form. And yet, if we can say, with Strong, that relics are an "expression of the Buddha's biography", why can we not say so of these various other embodiments?

Ultimately, then , whichever way we approach it and however we consider him to be most authentically embodied or presenced in the world, the question boils down to this: If we can say equally of all the Buddha's embodiments that they are "expressions of his biography", whither then the Buddha? Is *the Buddha himself* somehow merely "biography", or, even more incoherently, "an expression or extension of his biography"? What is this the biography *of,* then? What is even meant by the notion of "biography", if there is no form in which we can locate, identify or access the subject of the narrative? And, from the internal perspective of the tradition itself, this approach begs in turn the salvifically vital question – if all the forms of the Buddha to which we can turn are merely expressions of his biography, how does the Buddha actually intervene in the world (in *saṃsāra*) to save sentient beings? Will anyone really be ready to accept that they can be saved by a story?

To be fair to Strong, the impasses into which we are led by the assumptions underlying his "biography" thesis of relics, which I am here arguing are shared by all readings that skirt too delicately around the notion of full presence, are to some extent impasses shared by the tradition itself. How is the Buddha to be at once utterly transcendent of all conditioned reality, and yet at the same time, to remain accessible to the suffering beings who need him for their salvation? The fault of presence-shy readings of the relics is that they give too wide a berth one horn of this dilemma, only to be gored on the other: they recognise the metaphysical perils of claiming that a being like the Buddha is unequivocally *present,* but thereby end up failing to account for the possibility of his being present at all. And yet the imperative to liberation, which is the entire *raison d'être* for Buddhism as a salvific religion, *requires* that the Buddha enter in some form into the world, as the tradition so clearly recognised, whether it be in the teachings, in the ultimate truth of all things, in a relic, or even in a docetic display conjured up out of his power and compassion. What is needed is the Buddha's *real presence* – a genuine infusion of the true and the transcendent into the defile of falsehood and suffering – and for presence, an idea, an imagination, a memory, a conceit or a story is not enough. Only a full-fledged body will do.

Readings of relics that err too much on the side of absence, therefore, may therefore satisfy the armchair needs of etically distanced historians and scholars, but the entertainment of such readings is a luxury hardly likely to satisfy the urgent salvific requirements of believers. If such readings are thus inadequate to the emic demands that there be real possibilities for the Buddha's presence, they also thereby fail in the essential etic task of accurate description, since they remake Buddhist doctrine in the image of our own, excessively metaphysic-shy and sceptical orthodoxies, and thereby overlook vital concerns of the tradition itself.

Strong's reading of relics as "expressions or extensions of the Buddha's biography" certainly yields rich etic insights about the process whereby the Buddhist imagination may have worked and one of the key dynamics behind innovations in the history of Buddhist ideas and practice. It also has the partial virtue of enabling us to neatly sidestep, for some purposes, the knotty problem of presence. But we cannot make do with it, or other presence-shy readings of its ilk, alone. There is too much they leave unexplained about the power of relics to inspire faith and generate merit; to motivate practice and requite vast expenditure of time and resources; to spark wars and make or break kings. It is hard to imagine a (mere) biography, idea, imagining, or signifier etc. doing any of this.

Were this merely a problem with Strong's reading alone – were Strong, that is, simply adding a dimension to an understanding of relics that already included a rich and adequate account of the emic understanding of and relation to relics as embodiments of the Buddha – then this would not matter, of course. As I said at the beginning of this excursus, the problem is, rather, that Strong is a good representative of a much broader trend in the secondary literature on relics, where some squeamishness about or blindness to the power of the notion of presence has seen the field almost unanimously skirt around it altogether, or obscure the prevalence of presence in emic understanding and practice beneath a top-heavy accretion of too-sophisticated etic scepticism. I hope that this gap in the field can be partially redressed by my reading of relics as bodies, which can thereby act as a counteragent against the risk of incoherence or explanatory anaemia inherent in semioticist, psychologist or mentalist readings, that sidestep the problem of presence to their own detriment.[1254]

[1254] I emphasise that I do not mean by this reading to claim, of course, that the Buddha *is indeed* present in his relics, or any of his other embodiments, and therefore that they are his veritable bodies – only that those embodiments, including relics, are *understood as such* by much of the tradition, and that we miss a great deal if, out of our aversion to the philosophical problems entailed, we close our eyes to that reality completely.

4.1.4 Conclusions: Relics as the earliest special embodiment of the Buddha

In this section of this dissertation, then, I have argued that relics are indeed a special body of the Buddha. I have endeavoured to show, on the basis of key Kharoṣṭhī inscriptions, that this understanding was current as early as the turn of the Common Era.

Evidence shows clearly that the cult of relics was already current significantly earlier than this, in the Pāli-canonical period. It is impossible to demonstrate certainly that the understanding of relics as veritable bodies of the Buddha is this old, but we might also note, against any urge to excessive scepticism on this score, that such an understanding makes sense of the relic cult itself; that we have no indications contrariwise that the understanding of relics differed in the earlier period; and that we have no alternative explanation for the currency of the relic cult in earlier times. It is quite possible, therefore, that this understanding is older than our record can show us.

Regardless of whether the understanding of relics as bodies of the Buddha is only as old as the Kharoṣṭhī inscriptions, or older, it is, in light of other findings in this dissertation, the oldest conception for which we have evidence of a positive, special and adequate embodiment of the Buddha.

As we have seen in previous sections of this dissertation, there was little in earlier periods to answer to the name of a "special body of the Buddha". The nearest candidate we have examined in earlier periods, I believe, is the body of the thirty-two marks of the *mahāpuruṣa.* This body perhaps has in common with relics an intimate connection with what we might call the large "economy of merit". The body of marks, on the one hand, was understood before the

end of the Pāli-canonical period to be the product of the massive merit a Buddha had built up in all his lifetimes as a *bodhisattva.* On the other, relics perpetuated the key role of the realised Buddha in the economy of merit for other beings, namely, that he serves as the "field of merit" *par excellence,* a role which, like the body of marks, he is understood to assumes precisely in virtue of his immensely meritorious acts in prior lives. Despite this similarity, however, there are many respects in which the body of marks does not serve as a "special body of the Buddha" in the way that the relics do. In this period, at least, there is not, to my knowledge, any understanding that would allow the body of marks to make the Buddha present to the world in the way the relics can, and presumably for this reason, the body of marks does not yet assume any of the functional equivalences to the living Buddha that the relics serve. Presumably for this reason in turn, because it cannot be a recipient of offerings after the *parinirvāṇa,* the body of marks is not the object of any cultic activity.[1255]

On the other hand, as we saw in Chapter 3, there is no evidence available that allows us to confidently assign to any of the materials regarding other special bodies of the Buddha (especially the *dharmakāya*) a date as early as we have been able to assign here to relics in that status.

This means that the understanding of relics as bodies is significant not only for the interpretation of the relic cult itself, and because it opens our eyes better to the ongoing dialectic *between* relics and other competing conceptions of the Buddha's embodiments in later Buddhist history. It is also most significant because the relic cult thus seems to represent the

[1255] It may be, of course, that the dawn of the iconic period represents the beginning of some of these functions for the body of marks; but even if this is the case, the balance of the evidence would suggest that this function is certainly assumed significantly later by that body than by the relics. This is one place to regret the fact that the study of images as possible Buddha-bodies in their own right is beyond the limitations of this dissertation.

inception of the very notion of special, ideal bodies of the Buddha *per se.* The relic cult is thus most likely the hitherto unrecognised origin of the whole discourse of Buddha bodies as we take it as our object of study here. This has the further implication that a set of categories that Buddhist Studies has to date understood almost entirely under the aegis of high doctrine has its ultimate origins in practices that are only gradually articulated in our texts, and perhaps preexist that articulation as practices by several centuries.

The most remarkable piece of evidence we considered in the course of this chapter was the "Senavarma Inscription". I proposed that some of the many difficulties that attend the reading of this fascinating inscription might be resolved if we view it in the proper context of a larger history of ideas about embodiments, and recognise that its redactor is proposing a quite radical continuity or identity between the content of the realisation of the Buddha (his *dharma,* the *nirvāṇadhātu* etc.) and the relics. The relics are thus treated in the inscription as a kind of substance or worldly instantiation of that realisation, and therefore of the very being of the Buddha himself. We saw, further, that regardless of whether or not we accept this reading, the Senavarma Inscription is a watershed text in the history of embodiment doctrine at least in containing the earliest association of the Buddha's body (*antimaśarīra*) with adamant (*vajra*); and that, if my reading of the inscription as treating the relics as a veritable embodiment of the Buddha is right, it may also be the earliest hint at another key and related doctrine, that of the Buddha's actual immortality.

In closing these concluding remarks, I would note, finally, that recognising that relics are understood as bodies opens up at least three very fruitful avenues of enquiry that I can only think have previously been neglected because of a failure to arrive at that first recognition.

First, as I already mentioned, the recognition that relics are bodies opens up the equally important question of the relations that obtain between ideas and practices surrounding relics, and ideas and practices relating to other ideal embodiments of the Buddha. This is a dimension of the question I will attempt to explore, in some degree and only for some limited parts of the tradition, in some sections of this dissertation that follow.

Second, this recognition enables us to locate ideas and practices relating to relics in the broadest field of the problem of human embodiment in general, and in the more specific but still very large context of the overall Buddhist understanding of the problematic of embodiment. If the Buddha, that paragon of all religious ideals in the Buddhist context, is embodied in relics, then we can view relics as one (or more) solution(s) offered by the Buddhist tradition to the problem of ordinary given embodiment as it perceives that problem, and we should be asking what it is about relics that make them suited to this role.

Third, if Buddha relics are ideal religious bodies, then an adequate description of the Buddhist understanding of relics and their implications is surely one of the most substantial things the study of Buddhism has to offer to the broader, and much underdeveloped, field of the study of ideas of ideal embodiment and bodily transformation generally.

For these three reasons, it seems to me that the insight that relics are bodies of the Buddha is not at all negligible, and that the study of its implications is thus far severely underdeveloped and promises to furnish a very worthwhile avenue of future scholarly enquiry.

I have noted elsewhere in this dissertation that a kind of chronological "black box" intervenes between the Pāli-canonical materials (assuming that the Pāli canon was closed around 100

B.C.E.) and the majority of our earliest datable materials after that, which usually cannot be dated with any confidence before the second century C.E. The Kharoṣṭhī inscriptions at the centre of the analysis in this section of this dissertation comprise a small exception to this otherwise very general trend, and as we have seen, cast a small patch of light in this otherwise inscrutable period of Buddhist doctrinal history. In the next section of this chapter, we turn our attention to the first of an almost riotous profusion of ideas about the Buddha's ideal embodiments that seem to spring almost fully fledged from the darkness of this chronological black-hole, like Athena from the head of Zeus. First among the various sources for these ideas, because of the number of ideas it exemplifies remarkably early in the overall trajectory of doctrinal history, we will examine the ideas about the Buddha's embodiments contained in the *Lokânuvartanā-sūtra.*

Chapter 4.2: Sources of the docetistic doctrine of the Buddha's final worldly body, with a focus on Lokakṣema's *Lokânuvartanā-sūtra*

4.2.1 Introduction

In this section of this dissertation, my primary focus will be an examination of the ideas about the nature of the Buddha found in the *Lokânuvartanā-sūtra* T807 (LAn), translated by Lokakṣema sometime between 168 and 186 C.E. Some of the ideas we will consider, like the ideas considered in other sections of this chapter and this dissertation, bear directly on the question of the Buddha's embodiments, such as claims that his body is like adamant, the claim that he is to be identified somehow with all *dharmas,* and so on. However, we will also have to consider in detail the doctrine I will here call "Buddhist docetism", which is set forth at great length in this text, and which holds that the Buddha was not really incarnate in a human body in his apparent last worldly lifetime as *bodhisattva* and then Buddha, but that this was all a mere magical display conjured up by the Buddhas for the edification and salvation of sentient beings. It is important for us to consider this "Buddhist docetism" has typically been taken, with good reason, as an antecedent of the later doctrine of the *nairmāṇikakāya,* though the term *nairmāṇikakāya* itself does not in fact occur in any Mahāsāṃghika texts.

In considering LAn and docetistic conceptions of the Buddha more generally, we necessarily also have to deal with the commonplace ascription of docetistic Buddhalogy to the Mahāsāṃghika school of Mainstream Buddhism. It is the apparently universal and unquestioned understanding of secondary scholarship in Buddhist studies that this conception of the Buddha originated with the Mahāsāṃghikas, or with the Lokôttaravāda subsect of the Mahāsāṃghikas, and that this Mahāsāṃghika-originated idea thus represents a major Mainstream influence on the development of Mahāyāna Buddhalogy and Buddha-body doctrine. In the standard narrative of development of Buddha-body doctrine, therefore, as I mentioned

in the Introduction to this dissertation, the Mahāsāṃghika is thus assigned with the Sarvâstivāda to a "schools" phase that is understood to intercede between Pāli-canonical (and, in some authors, Āgama) doctrine, and the earliest specifically Mahāyāna notions of the Buddha's embodiment; in this chronological history, both schools are thought to play an important role in the transition from early conceptions to those of the Mahāyāna.

In most authors, the assignment to Mahāsāṃghika of this place in the narrative of development of conceptions of the Buddha and his bodies is so much taken for granted as to require no comment, and thus to be evident only implicitly, in the order in which ideas are presented. Thus, Takeuchi Shōkō also places "Mahāsāṃghika Buddhalogy" in an early phase of his history of conceptions of the Buddha, implicitly seeing it as prior not only to Mahāyāna but even to the supposedly "Sarvâstivāda" two-body theory.[1256] Paul Demiéville implies that Mahāsāṃghika was an antecedent to Mahāyāna doctrines of Buddha bodies when he lists the theses ascribed to them by Vasumitra (for which see §4.2.5 below) as part of his section on "Scholastique", prior to Mahāyāna.[1257] Ruben Habito implies the same narrative order,[1258] as does Louis de la Vallée Poussin[1259] and Akanuma Chizen.[1260] As we shall see below, Paul Harrison also discusses the

[1256] Takeuchi, "Buddakan" 159.

[1257] Demiéville, "Busshin" 177.

[1258] Habito, "Busshinron no hatten" 113.

[1259] "Appendice" 773-776.

[1260] Akanuma, "Triple Body" 14-16. Akanuma's presentation is rather confusing, and it is difficult be sure in many places exactly how he understands the chronology of the developments he describes. However, it seems clear that he imagines Mahāsāṃghika Buddhology as belonging to a roughly post-Pāli-canonical and pre-Mahāyāna phase from the fact that he describes it as belonging to the same phase as the "mythical transformation" of the *jātakas*, 14; he relates the Mahāsāṃghika developments in uncertain fashion to ideas found in the EA (i.e. the passages cited below §4.2.6); recalling that EA, as we shall see, is thought to have been translated from the Mahāsāṃghika *sūtrapiṭaka*), which he characterises as representing "a transitory form *between the corporeal Buddha and the Dharmakāya*", 16; and he says that *Mil*, which he places in the first century BCE, "naturally" represents "no further development . . . than the

place of Mahāsāṃghika/Lokôttaravāda ideas in terms that seem to presuppose a narrative in which those ideas precede and contribute to the shaping of Mahāyāna ideas.[1261] In contrast to the more implicit way the Mahāsāṃghika is assigned this place in the overall narrative in these authors, the interpretation of Mahāsāṃghika Buddhalogy as part of a "schools" phase that preceded, prepared the way for, and influenced the earliest Mahāyāna conceptions of Buddha bodies is clearly and overtly part of the overall thesis of Guang Xing's recent *Concept of the Buddha*.[1262] Finally, we can also note that this account of events is widespread enough to feature as part of standard histories and textbooks, as in Paul Williams's *Mahāyāna Buddhism*.[1263]

Despite the apparently universal consensus that docetistic Buddhalogy originated with the Mahāsāṃghika, it is necessary for us, studying the place of docetistic ideas in the overall development of doctrines of the Buddha's embodiment, to separate clearly the question of the extent to which we can be confident such ideas indeed originated with the Mahāsāṃghika from the question of the date at which, and manner in which, these ideas first appear in our record. In this section of this dissertation, one of my main contentions will be that it is quite clear that

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Mahāsāṃghika Buddhology as already referred to". All of this would seem clearly to imply that he assigns the Mahāsāṃghika Buddhalogy to a period fairly early in the post-schismatic landscape of "Hīnayāna" sects, in the late centuries BCE. Matters are confused, however, when he says p. 16 that he is talking about a period "early after the Nirvana, that is, in the second century of the Christian era". In light of his other comments bearing on relative dating, are we to understand that he means the second century *before* the Christian era? Assuming he dates the Buddha to the sixth century BCE, as was common at the time he was writing, how is a time over half a millennium later "early"? And how would we reconcile the assignation of these ideas to the second century CE with his other comments about dating, and the place he implicitly assigns Mahāsāṃghika Buddhalogy in the overall narrative?

[1261] See below n. 1338.

[1262] See esp. Chapter 3, bearing in mind the place of this chapter in the narrative that organises the whole book; also 180 for a clear statement of the place Guang ascribes "Mahāsāṃghika" in the overall development of Buddha-body doctrine. See also statements e.g. such as "the Mahāyānists accepted the Buddhology of the Mahāsāṃghikas in its entirety," 139. See my 2007 review of Guang for further criticisms of this feature, among others, of Guang's work.

[1263] Williams, *Mahāyāna Buddhism,* 18-20. Williams somewhat oversimplistically says, seemingly misquoting Paul Harrison, that *Lokânuvartanā-sūtra* is a Pūrvaśaila text (i.e. belongs to a sub-branch of the Mahāsāṃghikas); in fact, all Harrison says is that this was the opinion of (the rather late) Candrakīrti.

the Mahāsāṃghikas subscribed to and were known for docetistic doctrines by the fourth century of the Common Era at the latest, but that there is in fact not enough solid evidence for us to be confident that the docetistic conception did indeed first arise with the Mahāsāṃghikas. Rather, by far our earliest evidence of docetistic ideas, which is also nonetheless also one of the most developed and complex presentations of those ideas, is found in LAn.

LAn is sometimes identified with the Mahāsāṃghika or Lokôttaravāda school precisely on the basis of the fact that it contains the docetistic conception of the Buddha's final earthly life.[1264] And yet, as I shall argue below, for a period in which LAn is in fact our sole evidence of the docetistic ideas in question, and in the absence of any internal evidence in the text that would attach to it either of these sectarian labels, such an identification is entirely circular: we identify the text with the school on the basis of the ideas, but the only evidence we have that the school subscribed to those ideas at this point in history is precisely this same text. In fact, as I will also show below, LAn devotes more than half of its small compass to sophisticated ideas about the Buddha's relation to the *dharmadhātu* etc. that are paralleled nowhere in any known Mahāsāṃghika text, nor in the accounts of Mahāsāṃghika given by the later doxographers, but which are certainly characteristic of emergent Mahāyāna conceptions. This means that in the earliest form in which we encounter them in our record, docetistic conceptions of the Buddha's

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[1264] This is certainly the case in Guang Xing, for instance, who simply uses LAn as one of the various sources he draws upon indiscriminately to draw an artificially homogeneous and essentialised picture of "the" Mahāsāṃghika position. The position taken by the scholar who has studied the text most closely, Paul Harrison, is more nuanced, and it is not entirely clear whether he considers LAn to be a work *of* the Lokôttaravādins, or a source of ideas recognisable in the MV as Lokôttaravādins ideas, "Sanskrit Sources" 213, 227. However, in his concluding remarks, Harrison says, "LAn . . . could be . . . a relic, albeit in a fragmentary or reworked form, of a Prākrit proto-Mahāyāna tradition current among various subsects of the Mahāsāṃghikas in different parts of India;" 229. In the more recent "Some Reflections", Harrison further characterises the text as showing some slight signs of the Mahāyāna, but characterises it nonetheless (referring to its resonances with Prajñāpāramitā) as "not . . . inconsistent with Mainstream Buddhism" and as a "transitional" text which he speculatively suggests emerges from "the matrix of various Mainstream *nikāyas*", 3-4. He is also impressed by the fact that Candrakīrti assigns it to the Pūrvaśailas, who are of course a Mahāsāṃghika subsect, 4. It seems most likely to me, therefore, that Harrison too does indeed consider LAn as most likely a "Mahāsāṃghika" text.

body and his last incarnation generally are in fact intimately associated with a Mahāyāna doctrine as developed as anything else in the same period. We thus have no way of being sure that the docetistic ideas that concern us here do not in fact originate in a Mahāyāna context and might not be adopted *from* that context into Mahāsāṃghika literature, and indeed, this would be the more straightforward interpretation of our record, if we bracket out the (partially) contrary suggestions of significantly later doxography.

I will therefore argue that the attribution to the Mahāsāṃghika of the origin of these ideas is insufficiently supported in our record, and that we would to better to drop it. It adds nothing to our understanding of the actual history of the ideas that concern us, insofar as our evidence allows us to reconstruct that history, so that doing away with this attribution does not really lose us anything.

Conversely, however, as I believe scholarship to date amply demonstrates, the maintenance of the ascription of these ideas to "the" Mahāsāṃghika on such slender evidential grounds brings with it the risk of certain pernicious distortions in our perception of doctrinal history. On the best analysis of the complex evidence available to us, the Mahāsāṃghikas as a separate sectarian entity seem to have originated in a very early schism in the Buddhist fold, probably sometime in the second century after the *parinirvāṇa* of the Buddha. So far as I can determine, it is *only* the fact that "the" Mahāsāṃghika are known to have existed (though only in a very shadowy form and as the exponents of a very hazy set of ideas and practices) from so early in the record, on the one hand, while "the Mahāsāṃghika" are seen to have subscribed to docetistic ideas in the much later textual and doxographic record, on the other, that has justified the universal assumption that "the" Mahāsāṃghikas must have been in possession of docetistic Buddhalogy early enough to have preceded Mahāyāna instances of same, and

therefore, that "the" Mahāsāṃghika *influenced* the formation of Mahāyāna doctrines of the Buddha's bodies. If, however, we have no evidence that the Mahāsāṃghika indeed subscribed to these ideas earlier than they are evidenced in early Mahāyāna groups, this may well mean that the image of an early Mahāsāṃghika docetism exerting a formative influence on Mahāyāna Buddhalogy is a mere shadow puppet, cast on the screen of doctrinal history by the light of our own projecting assumptions shining on facts actually much closer to hand. If this is indeed the case, the primary harm done by these assumptions is that it forecloses the question of the actual origin of these ideas; nobody even asks where docetistic Buddhalogy might actually have come from, because "we all know" already that it came from "the" Mahāsāṃghika.

In keeping with this attempt to untangle from one another the two separable questions of the evidentially supportable history of docetistic ideas, on the one hand, and the grounds for the attribution of docetistic ideas to Mahāsāṃghika and Lokôttaravāda schools, on the other, my analysis here will proceed in two main steps.

In the first several subsections to follow, I will survey the extant sources for knowledge of Mahāsāṃghika doctrine. I will first eliminate the majority of these sources from consideration for our present purposes, primarily on the grounds that they contain no material relevant to the present discussion, or that they are too late, or both; I will also suggest that we must be more cautious than scholars have been hitherto of the polemical perspective of some of our doxographical sources. I will then consider the remaining sources for the ascription of docetistic Buddhalogy to the Mahāsāṃghikas, focusing primarily on the *Mahāvastu* and Vasumitra's treatise on the schools, while also drawing on some material from a handful of other texts. I will conclude that while these sources are more inconsistent with one another and conflicted than previous authors have noted, they do indeed provide ample evidence that

some kind of fundamentally docetistic Buddhalogy was accepted and promoted by the Mahāsāṃghikas by the fourth century C.E. at the latest. I will also conclude, however, that there is insufficient evidence for us to be confident, as previous scholars have been, that the Mahāsāṃghika or Lokôttaravāda schools indeed subscribed to docetistic Buddahology early enough to have predated and influenced the attested early Mahāyāna versions of the same ideas.

In the second part of this section of this dissertation, I will turn to our actual earliest evidence of docetistic Buddhalogy, the *Lokânuvartanā-sūtra* in the Chinese translation of Lokakṣema. There, I will argue that LAn is a very significant text for the development of Buddha-body doctrine, not only for its highly developed docetism, but also for its all-but-complete prototypical doctrine of *dharmakāya,* and for the fact that it is among our earliest evidence of two other important and related ideas – that the Buddha has a body like adamant, and that his lifespan is in fact infinite, both of which were destined to pan out into important but neglected aspects of the doctrine of the Buddha's embodiments as it developed through to the fourth century.

I will also argue that the presence of sophisticated versions of emergent Mahāyāna "metaphysical" doctrines in the second part of LAn, and the clear and inextricable links it draws between those conceptions and its docetistic vision of the Buddha's person, force us to recognise clear differences between the LAn and anything else we know as "Mahāsāṃghika" or "Lokôttaravāda", and prevent us from simplistically calling it a "Lokôttaravāda" text solely on the basis of its docetistic doctrines. Rather, I will argue, it makes sense to consider it as an early Mahāyāna text, and to drop the entirely moot question of its relation to a supposed (at this date) Lokôttaravāda "school" entirely. This means that insofar as we allow the evidence extant in

our record to be our guide, rather than the historically dubious claims of later doxographers removed by centuries and sectarian boundaries from the ideas they pretend to describe, it would be most plausible to conclude that docetism itself is a Mahāyāna notion at its very origin. Certainly, if we wish to be more cautious, as I think a more humble interpretation of our evidence and what it can tell us would require, we must at least say that as soon as we see it in our record, docetism is already thoroughly integrated into at least this strain of Mahāyāna thought, and that we really have no way of knowing where its ultimate origins might lie. Such a frank acknowledgement of ignorance, however, seems preferable to me to the construction of doxographical houses of cards that bear a questionable relation to our actual evidence, and it seems to me that it constitutes an important intermediate step towards the goal of constructing a more accurate picture of the history of doctrines of the Buddha's embodiments as it is reflected in the record that remains to us.

In closing this introduction, I must finally say a word justifying the place of this section in the overall structure of this study. As I noted in my "Introduction", it is my intention to arrange the materials studied here in something as close to chronological order as possible. As we shall see below, the *Lokânuvartanā-sūtra,* which forms the main focus of this section of this dissertation, is remarkable for a number of doctrines for which it constitutes the earliest or one of the earliest pieces of evidence. It is thus appropriate that we treat it as one of the earliest important pieces of evidence for the study of post-Pāli-canonical body doctrine overall, with the obvious exception of the Kharoṣṭhī reliquary inscriptions. However, I will also note below that precisely the extraordinary extent to which this text seems ahead of its time in doctrinal terms might be sufficient grounds for us to wonder (against the formidable authority of Paul Harrison on the question, and therefore with obvious trepidation) whether the text can indeed be as early as the ascription to Lokakṣema makes it. I will examine this question in more detail

below, but for the present, suffice it to note that I assign it to this position in my overall chronology somewhat tentatively.

4.2.2 Terms

As a first step in sorting out the problems with this standard account, prior to wading into the issues that will engage us most centrally in this section of this dissertation, I must offer two preliminary notes on the terminology I am to use.

In this study, I will follow la Vallée Poussin in using the term "Lokôttaravāda" in preference to "Mahāsāṃghika". I have several reasons for avoiding the sectarian label "Mahāsāṃghika". First, it is very old (accordingly to tradition, dating back to the first schism), but what we know about the actual ideas and texts of the school is almost uniformly far newer. Second, the label has a number of different questions bound up in its usage: a diffuse and historically rambling textual corpus, only spottily attested; a shadowy institutional identity, tied up with a Vinaya lineage; and an ill-defined set of doctrines, mostly known to us through the very imperfect lenses of opponents and later doxographers. Use of the term "Mahāsāṃghika" to identify the docetistic doctrine, in particular, seems, by dint of the hoary ring of that label, to prejudice the question of whether the doctrine is in fact as old as the Mahāsāṃghika label itself; but one of my aims in what follows will be rather to restrict myself to what can be safely concluded about relative chronology on the basis of the evidence we have to hand, without the interference of such prejudices.

By contrast, it is surely more accurate to refer to the texts that espouse the docetistic doctrine as "Lokôttaravāda" ("Expositors of the Supramundane") on descriptive grounds, rather than "Mahāsāṃghika" ("great[er] assembly") given that the latter label names them precisely for the

ideas at issue here. In using the label "Lokôttaravāda", however, I mean to denote nothing more than precisely the texts adduced below, and the ideas contained in them. I do not mean, that is to say, to imply that these texts were necessarily the product of a "school", except in the loosest sense in which we might say, for instance, "one school of thought holds", that is, merely to refer to a set of opinions held by indeterminate individuals with perhaps no relations other than subscription to the opinions in question. In particular, I do not mean to imply the existence of any social group or institution centring on the texts or defined primarily by the criteria of adherence to and promulgation of the ideas. In other words, "Lokôttaravāda" here functions merely as a label of convenience for the ideas and texts under discussion, without prejudice as to wider questions of Buddhist social or institutional history.

If we are thus to use the label "Lokôttaravāda" solely to point to a set of ideas and the texts that enshrine them, it is also helpful to be clear exactly what kind of ideas we have in mind. Louis de la Vallée Poussin, following Barth, finesses the label nicely: as Barth says, all Buddhists understand the Buddha to be "supramundane", i.e. transcendent, and so it scarcely distinguishes any sub-group to say that they profess such a doctrine *per se.* What is distinctive about Lokôttaravāda doctrine is that it holds that the Buddhas have *absolutely nothing in common* with the world; *everything* in them is supramundane.[1265] As la Vallée Poussin further points out, "The notion of the 'miraculous' and the notion of *lokôttara,* 'superior to the world', 'supramundane', are distinct. The Buddha is more miraculous in the Āgamas of the Sarvâstivādins than in the Pāli Āgamas (*sic*), and even more miraculous in the Lalitavistara. But one can multiply miracles and extraordinary qualities without being a Lokôttaravādin, just so long as one recognises in the Buddha some mundane qualities, some *laukikadharmas*".[1266]

[1265] "Appendice" 773; see Barth 466-467.

[1266] "Appendice" 774.

These observations seem to me to furnish a fine basis for characterising the doctrines I here want to call Lokôttaravāda: they posit a Buddha who is, in his true status or "being" (whatever that word might mean in a Buddhist context) beyond the world (*lokôttara*), such that any appearance he may make of being in the world is an artificial show designed to edify beings and thereby save them, but does not reflect upon the reality of buddhahood or impinge upon the Buddha in himself.

It is in this sense that I will also freely use the word "docetism" and cognates to describe this doctrine. This term is defined in its Christian context as "asserting the unreality of the body of the Saviour;" e.g. "that the food which he took did not serve for the nourishment. . . of his body by real assimilation;" "that Christ's body was not human, but either a phantom, or of real but celestial substance".[1267] "The earliest Gnostics . . . called Docetæ, believed the body of Jesus to have been . . . either a mere optical illusion, or . . . something ethereal and impalpable."[1268] I do not mean by the use of this term to imply that the Buddhist doctrine in all its details is identical to the Christian doctrine, and I hope that I can use the term as a merely descriptive label without the overtones of wrong-headedness that perhaps hang about the English word as a result of the official consideration of it as heresy and error by the Catholic Church.[1269] This is not to say that I use the label merely as a convenience and do not consider that its common applicability in the two cases belies any deeper affinities between the positions so labelled. In fact, I do, and hope to pursue the comparison in future work, as I believe that the common

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[1267] OED s.v. "docetism", "Docetæ".

[1268] E. Burton, *Lectures Upon Ecclesiastical History* (1831–33), xii, cited in OED s.v. "Docetæ".

[1269] See *The Catholic Encyclopedia* s.v. "Docetæ", where it is noted that "Docetism is not properly a Christian heresy at all, as it did not arise in the Church from the misunderstanding of a dogma by the faithful, but rather came from without." The article nonetheless speaks of docetism as a "heresy" throughout.

features of the Christian and Buddhist doctrines in question, and their common ties to something that could further legitimately be called "gnosticism" in both cases, raises deep questions about the reasons such similar positions could be elaborated in apparently very different religious contexts; and further, that the different vicissitudes and eventual destinies of the doctrines in question within their respective larger religious cultures could also guide us to important historical and comparative insights.[1270] However, the large comparative questions that would inevitably be entailed by any attempt to address this comparison seriously render it well beyond the scope of the present study, and for present purposes, the reader can take the term "docetism" and cognates merely to refer, similarly, to the basic "illusionist" doctrine of the texts I am calling "Lokôttaravāda".

With these preliminary terminological considerations out of the way, we can now turn to another, more substantive preliminary question, the consideration of our sources for the doctrines in question. In what follows, I will survey our sources for knowledge of "the" Mahāsāṃghika, with the intention, first, of differentiating between our various sources and determining exactly what they can and cannot be relied upon to tell us. The result of this first exercise will be to narrow down the field of available sources to a small subset that actually bear upon the question of Mahāsāṃghika or "Lokôttaravāda" allegiance to what I am here calling *lokôttaravāda* ideas in the specific period that interests us here.

4.2.3 Our sources for the study of Mahāsāṃghika doctrine

First, it is important that we distinguish, along the lines proposed above, between sources for the Mahāsāṃghika, which as we have already noted is quite a broad and diffuse label, and

[1270] See below for further brief comment on the potential for such comparative study in LAn in particular; §4.2.8, and n. 1431 in particular.

sources for the "Lokôttaravāda" in the specific and narrow sense of the ideas that interest us here.

Relatively few texts survive from the Mahāsāṃghika school as a whole (though the texts mentioned in various secondary sources, when gathered together, are more plentiful than many individual secondary sources seem to recognise), and it seems to me that we are in a very poor position to state much with confidence about what their doctrinal positions were right through the period I am here calling "Pāli-canonical" and well into the Common Era. What follows is the most complete list I have been able to amass of the various sources used by different secondary scholars to explore the history of this school.[1271] I will show shortly, most of these sources are irrelevant for our present purposes, but given the degree of confusion about so-called "Mahāsāṃghika Buddhalogy" and its date and place in the history of body doctrine in work to date, it is important to lay these sources out and discuss the *reasons* they are not relevant, in order to clear up that confusion.

Much of what survives of Mahāsāṃghika's own literature is from the Vinaya. We have the *Bhikṣuṇī-vinaya* of the Mahāsāṃghika-Lokôttaravādin;[1272] the Sanskrit of the Mahāsāṃghika *Prātimokṣa*;[1273] the *Abhisamācārikā Dharmā,* a supplement to the *Bhikṣu-Prakīrṇaka-Vinaya*;[1274] a

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[1271] Readers who note the deliberate omission of the *Lokânuvartanā-sūtra* from this preliminary list are referred to the section on that text below, where I explore the reasons we cannot be sure it is indeed of a Mahāsāṃghika or Lokôttaravada *school,* though it does contain the *ideas* I am here calling *lokôttaravāda.*

[1272] Roth's own edition, *Bhikṣuṇī-vinaya* [*Manual of Discipline for Buddhist Nuns*]: *Including Bhikṣuṇī-prakīrṇaka and a Summary of the Bhikṣu-prakīrṇaka of the Ārya-Mahāsāṃghika-Lokottaravādins* (Patna : K.P. Jayaswal Research Institute, 1970).

[1273] See Roth, "Particular Features" 81, and n. 13 for details of publication by Tatia; also Norman, *Pāli Lit.* 21, n. 29; Prebish, *Buddhist Monastic Discipline,* for a translation of this text. The Sanskrit was also published as W. Pachow and Ramakanta Mishra, eds., "The Prātimokṣa Sūtra of the Mahāsāṃghikas", *Journal of the Gaṇgānāth Jhā Research Institute* 10, nos. 1-4 (Nov-August 1952-1953), 1-48, Appendix; cited in Nattier and Prebish 242 n. 12. Roth considers the Tatia superior; "Notes" 317.

fragment of their *Skandhaka* found at Bāmiyān;[1275] citations from the *Bhikṣu-prakīrṇaka Vinaya* in Śāntideva's *Śikṣāsamuccaya*;[1276] and we also have the *Sphuṭārtha Śrīghanācārasaṃgrahaṭīkā,* to which Masahiro Shimoda has found parallels in the Chinese *Mahāsāṃghika-vinaya*.[1277] In Chinese, further, we have their *Vinaya* (摩訶僧祇律, T1425, trans. 416 C.E.) and *Bhikṣuṇī-vinaya* (摩訶僧祇比丘尼戒本, T1427, trans. 405 C.E.) translated into Chinese by Faxian (法顯) and Buddhabhadra (佛陀跋陀羅, 覺賢),[1278] and the *Prātimokṣa* (摩訶僧祇律大比丘戒本, T1426, trans. 398-415 C.E.) attributed to Buddhabhadra alone. Even the most famous text of this school, the *Mahāvastu,*[1279] is from the Vinaya, being an introductory section that lays out the historical foundation for the institution of the Saṃgha in the life and ministry of the Buddha.[1280] In

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1274 See Roth, "Particular Features" 81, and n. 12 for details of publication by Jinananda.

1275 Norman, *Pāli Lit.* 24; Roth, "Particular Features" 81. Gómez mentions other unspecified "fragments of the Sūtra section of their canon" also found at Bāmiyān, 120.

1276 Roth, "Particular Features" 81.

1277 See Shimoda, "The *Spuṭārtha*". Note that Derrett demurs from the identification of this text with Mahāsāṃghika *per se,* as Shimoda observes; Derrett 7. Derrett, however, did not have the benefit of the parallels identified by Shimoda. Shimoda notes that Sanghasena attributes this work to the Mahāsāṃghika also, in his Skt. edition of the text, 1; Shimoda 495. Sanghasena's attribution is based upon a passage in which the text prescribes that monks should identify themselves as belonging to the Mahāsāṃghika in response to queries about their *nikāya*; Sanghasena 74, Derrett 80-81.

1278 This text has been translated into English by Hirakawa Akira, *Monastic Discipline for the Buddhist Nuns: An English Translation of the Chinese Text of the Mahāsāṃghika-Bhiksuni-Vinaya* (Patna: Kashi Prasad Jayaswal Research Institute, 1982).

1279 The *Mahāvastu* is identified as belonging to the Mahāsāṃghika in its colophon, and this identification is also supported on the basis of some of its content. The identification of the text as Mahāsāṃghika in secondary scholarship dates back at least to Burnouf, who according to Barth made it on several grounds, including the fact that the whole work, prose and verse, was written in "Prakrit", that de Körös repeats a tradition that the Mahāsāṃghikas used Prakrit in their works; Barth, review of Senart, 456-457, citing *Introduction à l'histoire du Bouddhisme* 452. Another ground for the identification is a note appended to the end of Jñānagupta's mammoth (60 *juan*) Sui translation called the *Fo ben xing ji jing* (佛本行集經, **Abhiniṣkramaṇasūtra,* T190), cited by Wassiljew and Beal, which states that the same text is called *Mahāvastu* by the Mahāsāṃghikas, *Lalitavistara* by the Sarvâstivādins, and so on; T190.932a16-21, see Barth 457 and n. 2, 3. Barth points out, however, that "too much as been made" of this note, since the works so compared bear little resemblance to one another in their content; 457-458.

1280 Gómez, "Mahāsāṃghika" 120.

addition to these Vinaya materials, the *Ekottarâgama* translated into Chinese by Saṃghadeva (T125) is also held to be from their *sūtrapiṭaka*.[1281] Nattier and Prebish categorise as Mahāsāṃghika the *Śāriputraparipṛcchā-sūtra* (舍利弗問經, T1465).[1282] Gómez also notes that there is "a distinct Mahāsāṃghika influence on a Dharmaguptaka text, the *Śāriputrâbhidharma-śāstra*" (舍利弗阿毘曇論, T1548).[1283] Finally, we also have the *Fenbie gongde lun* (分別功德論, T1507), an anonymous translation ascribed by the Chinese catalogues to the very early period of the latter Han (i.e. earlier than 220 C.E.); this text is described by Nattier and Prebish, following Lamotte, as "half Mahāsāṃghika, half Mahāyānist".[1284]

We also have doxographical and sometimes polemical sources, all of them very much later (up to a thousand years) than the ideas and events they purport to describe, and almost all written from the point of view of other schools.[1285] We have in particular schools written from the point of view of the Mahāsāṃghika's Sarvâstivāda opponents, or derived from such sources: the **Mahāvibhāṣā*, the *Abhidharmanyāyânusāra* of Saṃghabhadra,[1286] the *Mañjuśrīparipṛcchā-sūtra*,[1287]

[1281] On this attribution, see Bareau, *Les sectes* 57; Norman following Waldschmidt, *Pāli Lit.*, 57.

[1282] Bareau, *Les sectes* 17; briefly, 22. For an English summary of the list of sects and subsects found in this text, see Lamotte, *History* 532.

[1283] Bareau, *Les sectes* 57. Translated in 408 by Dharmagupta and Dharmayaśas; Lancaster, *Catalogue* s.v. K969.

[1284] Nattier and Prebish 257 n. 67, following Lamotte, "Buddhist Controversy over the Five Theses". Nattier and Prebish give the title in error as *Fen-pie-kong-yo*[*sic*]*-lun.* This text is a commentary on the *Ekôttarâgama,* though it is surely anachronistic to say with Nattier and Prebish that it is a commentary on the Chinese version of that text, since it far predates the extant Chinese version.

[1285] For a summary of the accounts in many of these sources of the reason for the original schism that gave rise to the Mahāsāṃghika, see Nattier and Prebish 239-240; for greater depth, see Bareau, *Les sectes* Ch. 1.

[1286] This text is referred to in Guang Xing, *Concept of the Buddha* 59, as a source for the description of supposed Mahāsāṃghika doctrine. It is one of several serious failings in Guang's chapter on the Mahāsāṃghika, in fact, that he seems almost entirely to rely on Sarvâstivāda sources for his characterisation of their views, with no apparent awareness of the dangers of distortion this might entail.

and "Vasumitra's" treatise on the schools, i.e. the *Samayabhedôparacanacakra*.[1288] Here we can also include Bhavya's *Nikāyabhedavibhaṇgavākhyāna*, which relays Sthavira, Mahāsāṃghika and Sammitīya accounts of the reasons for the schism that produced the Mahāsāṃghikas;[1289] and the doxography by Vinītadeva used by Bareau. We can also include the Dīpavaṃsa of the Theravāda, which also relays a tradition about the reasons for the schism ("ten [lax] practices", *dasa-vatthūni*).[1290] Into this category also falls Jizang's commentary on Vasumitra, the *San lun xuan yi* 三論玄義 (T1852), and a slightly earlier lost commentary of Paramārtha on the same text, which Demiéville thinks formed the basis for Jizang, that has survived in only fragments cited in Japanese texts.[1291] I will omit some even later doxographical traditions which add nothing to our present analysis.[1292]

1287 Bareau, *Les sectes* 19-20. Bareau considers that the lists of schools given by this text are directly derivative from Vasumitra but based upon a "poor reading" of the latter, and therefore add little fresh information.

1288 Tib. *gShung lugs kyi bye brag bkod pa'i 'khor lo,* Ōtani 5639, Tōhoku 4138. We have three Chinese versions of this text, which are, in (likely) chronological order: (1) *Shiba bu lun* 十八部論, T2032, attributed to Paramārtha but thought by Demiéville to be by Kumārajīva (Demiéville, "Les versions " 48 n. 1, opinion repeated in "L'origine" 15; followed by Lamotte, *History* 530; for Demiéville's reasons, see below n.1308; Tsukamoto agrees, *Cycle of the Formation* 86); (2) *Bu zhi yi lun* 部執異論, T2033, also attributed to Paramārtha (Lamotte is incorrect when he states that Demiéville, "L'origine", is a translation of this text, *History* 530); (3) 異部宗輪論, T2031, translated by Xuanzang. See Masuda, *Origins and Doctrines*; Tsukamoto, *The Cycle of the Formation;* Teramoto and Hiramatsu, *I bu shū rin ron*; Yao, *Yi bu zong lun lun.* Demiéville mentions that the text was translated from the Tibetan version into Russian very early by Wassiliew, and thence into German by Schiefner (*Der Buddhismus, seine Dogmen, Geschichte und Literatur,* St Petersburg 1860); Demiéville, "L'origine" 15. Note that Bareau shows connections between this text and the Mahāsāṃghika's own *Śāriputraparipṛcchā,* which may mean that its account is more faithful to a Mahāsāṃghika perspective than some more outright Sarvâstivāda works; Bareau 18.

1289 Bareau, *Les sectes*17; 20-21; 22-23. For an English summary of the contents of Bhavya's lists, see Lamotte, *History* 534-536. Bhavya's treatise is considered by Tāranātha to be a Sthavira tradition, but Bareau considers it Sarvâstivādin; Bareau, *Sectes* 20-21, Nattier and Prebish 246.

1290 Nattier and Prebish 239; Bareau 16-17.

1291 See Demiéville, "L'origine", esp. 19-24, 28-47. The Paramārtha commentary is cited by Demiéville primarily from citations preserved in T2300, the *San ron gen gi ken yū shū* 三論玄義檢幽集 by Chūkan 中觀 (according to Christian Wittern's "WWW Database of Chinese Buddhist texts", to be identified with Chōzen 證禪; see Wittern's database s.v. T70N2300, http://kanji.zinbun.kyoto-u.ac.jp/~wittern/can/can2/t70/t70n2300.htm, accessed May 11, 2007); Demiéville 17. Demiéville also makes some use of citations preserved in Kuiji's *Yi bu zong lun lun shu shu ji* 異部宗輪論疏述記, X[*u zang*

Given that we are here interested in examining "Mahāsāṃghika" texts only insofar as they evince the doctrine we are here calling "Lokôttaravāda", or more broadly, insofar as they bear on the history of doctrines of the Buddha's embodiments, it is possible for us to eliminate most of these sources on one or both of two grounds, and to note a third ground for exercising severe caution with regard to the information found in some of them.

First, much of the literature listed above is not relevant to the problem of the Buddha's embodiments more broadly, since the texts concerned contain little or no material on the Buddha's body or bodies; and, more narrowly, these texts also, in many cases, evince no obvious signs of *lokôttaravāda* ideas. On these grounds, we can first eliminate the following texts and issues from consideration. First, we can eliminate all texts or parts of texts that treat of the "five theses" that are said variously to have been at stake in either the first schism or in a second schism[1293] that split the Mahāsāṃghika's internally between a "Northern" and "Southern" branch.[1294] The ideas that informed these events, so far as I can determine, have

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jing = Zokuzōkyō]844; the article on the *piṭaka* 諸藏章 in the second *juan* of Kuiji's *Dasheng fa yuan yi lin zhang* 大乘法苑義林章, T1861. See Nattier and Prebish 246 for comments on the way these texts, though not of Sarvâstivādin authorship, thus derive from Sarvâstivādin doxographic traditions.

[1292] Yijing, for which see Bareau, *Les sectes* 24; Vinītadeva, Bareau 24-25; Taranārtha and other late Tibetan traditions, Bareau 26-27.

[1293] Indeed, if the five theses are, as Nattier and Prebish argue for some quite persuasive reasons, properly to be allocated to the second, internal schism and not the first founding schism that produced the Mahāsāṃghika as such, they become doubly irrelevant for present purposes, since, as they point out, the Lokôttaravāda were included among the so-called "northern" subsects, which would therefore not have subscribed to the five theses in any case; 263-264.

[1294] This eliminates from consideration for present purposes the **Mahāvibhāṣā* account of the reasons for the schism, and the scandalous narrative about Mahādeva in *juan* 99, for which see Mair, "Asian Story of the Oedipal Type"; though elsewhere, as we shall see in below in the course of our study of the *Vibhāṣā* itself, the text does engage in polemics against positions it characterises as "Mahāsāṃghika" which do indeed answer broadly to the description of *lokôttaravāda*.

almost no relevance to the ideas we are here calling "Lokôttaravāda",[1295] and consideration of the events themselves[1296] therefore merely constitutes a somewhat dangerous distraction in the present study – dangerous because the antiquity of these events seems to have lent to the label "Mahāsāṃghika" an air of long history that may have been illegitimately applied to *lokôttaravāda* ideas, and thus led to the assumption that "the Mahāsāṃghika" or "the Lokôttaravāda" as an institutional group must have been the *source* of these ideas, and borrowed therefrom into the Mahāyāna.

Considering the problem from the perspective of individual texts, we can eliminate the *Śāriputraparipṛcchā*, whose account of the original schism relates not to the Buddhalogical issues that concern us here, but to the Vinaya.[1297] We can eliminate the *Mañjuśrīparipṛcchā*.[1298] We can eliminate the *Vinaya,*[1299] and the *Prātimokṣa* and *Bhikṣuṇī-vinaya,* which latter two texts mention nowhere the problem of the Buddha's bodies or *lokôttaravāda* ideas. We can also eliminate the

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[1295] On the ideas that are thought to have contributed to the schism that produced the Mahāsāṃghika as an institutional group, see Gómez, "Mahāsāṃghika" 121 (note that Gómez's presentation here, however, seems to impute to the Mahāsāṃghika all the ideas associated with their sub-branches at all phases of history and attributed to them by even very late sources, a problem that is particularly apparent in his treatment of their supposed "Buddhology"); Nattier and Prebish, 239 ff.

[1296] On those events, see esp. Nattier and Prebish, infra.

[1297] Sections of the *Śāriputraparipṛcchā* that bear on the Mahāsāṃghika schism, T1465.900b20-c13, have nothing to do with the *lokôttaravāda* ideas that interest here, nor otherwise with doctrines of the Buddha's embodiments. For a translation of a key passage from this account, see Lamotte, *Histoire* 189, cited (in English) in Nattier and Prebish 267.

[1298] *Mañjuśrīparipṛcchā* just lists the subsects of Mahāsāṃghika, including Lokôttaravāda, without saying much about them; T468.501a29-b11. We have already noted that Bareau thinks these lists are in any case derivative of Vasumitra's; see n. 1287.

[1299] The Chinese *Vinaya* contains one passage that discusses the Buddha as embodied in the *dharma,* T1425.455c19-26; but this is scarcely remarkable at this date and does not contain anything specifically "Lokôttaravāda"; it is rather just the usual "Vakkali" notion that to truly see the Buddha one must see the *dharma* and not his physical body (which is named by no special technical name here). The text also contains some slight indication that the Buddha could create magical displays, but not of his own bodies in the manner of docetistic doctrine or *nairmāṇikakāya;* T1425.455c09-12.

Śāriputrâbhidharma-śāstra, from, as Bareau notes, *lokôttaravāda* ideas (and "ontological speculation") are entirely absent.[1300]

Indeed, it is worth our while noting a minority of odd cases which do purport to explain the label "Lokôttaravāda", but do so in terms that are still largely irrelevant to our purposes here, that is, with reference to ideas other than those I am here calling *lokôttaravāda*. Jizang, for example, describes the doctrines of the Lokôttaravāda school by saying,

> "The third [of the sects produced in the schism under discussion] was the school of the doctrine of supramundanity (出世說部, *lokôttaravāda*). This school held that mundane *dharmas* are not real, since they are the effects (fruit) of *karma,* which in turn is the effect of misconception (顛倒, *viparyaya*); but that supramundane *dharmas* are not produced by misconception, and are thus real."[1301]

It seems likely that Jizang is here echoing the characterisation of Paramārtha, who likewise describes the doctrines of the school thus:

> "The Lokôttaravāda school maintained that mundane *dharmas,* being all alike products of misconception (*viparyaya*), are nothing more than fictional designations; whereas, by contrast to the school just described [the Ekavyavahārika], they recognised the real nature of supramundane *dharmas,* and did not consider them fictional. With regard to mundane *dharmas,* they taught that from misconception arise the defilements; from defilements, action (*karma*); and from *karma,* reward. Because it is produced by

[1300] Bareau, *Les sectes* 57. With regard to other dimensions of embodiment doctrine: the text does not mention the *dharmakāya,* though a definition of the *bodhisattva* does state, among other criteria, that they realise the thirty-two marks and that they (will) realise the ten powers and four confidences (cf. the *āveṇikadharmas*) of the Tathāgata; T1548.585a25-b01. An extended passage featuring the term 餘色身 and speaking of manifesting it by "transformation" 化 refers rather to the old idea that an accomplished meditator can manifest a magical double of his ordinary body in the Brahmā Heavens, etc., and does not refer specially to the Buddha; T1548.712a25-c29. Similarly, elsewhere the term *rūpakāya* appears as part of a discussion of the ordinary "material body of four gross elements" (四大色身) of any sentient being, but is not especially predicated of the Buddha, T1548.593a29-b29; that this is so is especially clear in a definition elsewhere in the text of insight into the nature of the body, which uses the same term in the context of a verbatim repetition of the DN 2 pericope from the "snake slough" model describing the inadequacy of the given physical body, T1548.613a14-16; in the same chapter, these terms are used repeatedly in descriptions of *kayânusmṛti*. In other words, the doctrines of embodiment that are found in the text are extremely conservative, and would certainly not support any contention that Mahāsāṃghika played a role in the development of new ideas already current in the period of its translation, i.e. by its *terminus ad quem*.

[1301] 二出世說部。此部言。世間法從顛倒生業。業生果。故是不實。出世法不從顛倒生。故是真實, 1852.8c27-29, Demiéville 42.

misconception, all this is empty of substance and therefore not real; it is nothing more than fictional designations. Supramundane *dharmas* comprise the path and its fruit. The fruit of the path is the twofold emptiness, whereas the path is the special knowledge (*jñāna*) that can penetrate emptiness. Since the principle of the twofold emptiness is real, special knowledge of the twofold emptiness is similarly real (true): a real object (*viṣaya*) can only produce a real knowledge, and [only] a real knowledge can understand a real object. It is for this reason that the path [as much as its fruit] has real existence."[1302]

What is notable for our purposes about these brief descriptions of the ideas of the Lokôttaravāda school is that they do not mention the status of the Buddha or anything that might bear, other than at quite a remote remove, on issues of docetism.[1303] In other words, in the memory of at least one tradition of doxography, even the specifically Lokôttaravāda school (let alone the Mahāsāṃghika more generally) was *not* defined by its relation to supposed docetistic doctrine, and the very term *lokôttaravāda* had an entirely different interpretation. This should teach us to be wary of assuming that wherever the term Lokôttaravāda is applied as a sectarian label, it carries the value we might think it has on the basis of the most common doxographical characterisations.

A second ground upon which we should eliminate many of our sources for our present purposes, or at least exercise more caution than has hitherto been exercised in their use, is that most of this literature is only attested, in relative terms, quite late in our record. We cannot therefore rely upon it with confidence to draw any conclusions about the state of supposed Mahāsāṃghika or Lokôttaravāda doctrine in the period that concerns us in this chapter, i.e. the early beginnings of the post-Pāli-canonical record, which is precisely the period in which these

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[1302] Demiéville 45. 二說出世部者。 此執世間法從顛倒起。但有假名。出世非假皆是真實。此部與前一說所執有異。一說部明一切法皆是假名。此部明世間法從顛倒生煩腦煩惱生業業勝果報。既從顛倒生皆是虛空。虛空故非真實。悉是假名也。出世法有道及道果。二空是道果。能通達二空智是道。二空之理既是真實。二空智亦真實。真實境純生真實智。真實智能通達真實境。故道亦是真實有; T2300.495c02-12. My translation was helped by Demiéville's French, but departs from it in details.

[1303] This is also true of the other, non-Lokôttaravāda subsects of the Mahāsāṃghika as they are described by Jizang.

ideas might have been fresh and novel enough to have actually been influential upon other doctrines of Buddha bodies in other streams of Buddhist literature. Once we reach a period posterior to clear evidence of broadly docetistic interpretations of the Buddha's earthly existence in other streams of literature, it is a moot question whether its presence in Mahāsāṃghika texts is evidence of the origin of the ideas concerned in those texts, or whether rather they may perhaps not have been borrowed from elsewhere.

Although the date of the *Sphuṭārtha Śrīghanācārasaṃgrahaṭīkā* is apparently far from clear, it is thought by Sanghasena to date to any time between the fourth and twelfth century C.E., and most likely, on stylistic grounds, after the sixth century;[1304] Derrett places it around 500, on the basis of "evident dependence on Vasubandhu's *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*" and a "large number of Mahāyāna clichés".[1305] For our present purposes, however, this text is entirely excluded from consideration by the single fact alone that it already knows *trikāya* doctrine and is happy to adduce it; any arguments from it about supposed "Mahāsāṃghika" ideas that might have influenced the development of Buddha-body doctrine well prior to the elaboration of *trikāya* would therefore be entirely circular and fallacious.[1306]

On the grounds of date, we must also, in the present context of study, make cautious use, at best, of even relatively "early"[1307] doxographical texts such as Vasumitra's

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[1304] Sanghasena 1-2.

[1305] Derrett 7.

[1306] *sa ca trividhena dharmasāṃbhogikena nairmāṇikena ca* [*kāyena*] *vyavasthita iti . . .* " "He is constituted in three [bodies], viz. *dharma*-[body], enjoyment-[body] and miraculous (metaphoric [!*sic*]-[body] . . . " Sanghasena 6, Derrett 18; additions in square brackets are Derrett's.

[1307] Bareau, who has made the most careful study of the various sources for the early schools and the dates of those sources, notes that none of the sources providing "schools" lists date before 300 CE, though he also notes, against this consideration, that the wide geographic and sectarian spread of the sources we do have makes it possible to be confident that shared information across the different sources

Samayabhedôparacanacakra;[1308] and of course be all the more cautious about later works such as those by Bhavya, Paramārtha, Jizang and Vinītadeva. Date similarly gives us reason to exercise caution in using the testimony of the *Vibhāṣā,* for which the *terminus ad quem* similarly is the 383 translation of Saṃghabhūti or, more frequently for the bulk of the content of the text, the translation made in 437 by Buddhvarman and Daotai. Roth gives reasons to think that some of the extant Vinaya works as a whole date to around the first or second century of the Common Era, based upon the correlation of linguistic features with those of inscriptions.[1309] Even so,

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is considerably older; Bareau, "Les sectes" 16. Note also that Bareau points out a number of sources that suggest that by the epoch in which these texts were redacted, only approx. five of the eighteen sects concerned were still in existence; 22. This means that even the earliest information is in large part speaking of schools that were merely a memory at the time of writing.

[1308] Bareau considers Vasumitra to date from approx. 350 CE; *Les sectes* 21; thus, although it is early among the texts Bareau considers in his first chapter, it is roughly two centuries later than the early material in the Chinese record, which is our proper focus in the present chapter. Even if this Vasumitra were indeed the same figure attributed with overall responsibility for the compilation of the **Mahāvibhāṣā* and the authorship of the 阿毘達磨界身足論 (**Abhidharma-dhātu-kāya-pāda-śāstra,* T1540)*,* then this would place it no earlier than the *Vibhāṣā.* The actual authorship of this text is far from a simple matter, however, and it is also entirely possible that the text, or at least some of the material it contains, is significantly later than its putative author. For a discussion of the problem of authorship and a summary of some Japanese scholarship on the topic, see Teramoto and Hiramatsu's "Kaidai" 解題, pp. 1-4. The traditions contain two main conflicting accounts, one on which a single Vasumitra is responsible for all these various texts, and one in which there are in fact two Vasumitras. Tāranātha even attributes the doxographical text at issue here to a much later Vasumitra, the author of a commentary on Vasubandhu's AK, which Teramoto and Hiramatsu point out indicates at least that there was much uncertainty in the tradition on this question. Teramoto and Hiramatsu themselves in the end conclude that little can be said with certainty beyond the opinion advanced by Kimura in his own "Kaidai" to his *Kokuyaku issaikyō* version of the same text, viz. that we must "infer that it is the work of someone among the adherents of the Sarvâstivāda, written upon the basis of traditions within that school, which was then attributed to Vasumitra as a prominent authority within the school, and subsequently, through a progressive process of editing and supplementation, assumed the form in which we find it today;" 4. Paul Demiéville also notes that "the theses attributed to the various sects in the treatise of Vasumitra only evince a weak degree of agreement with those attributed to them in the *Vibhāṣā*", "L'origine" 24 fn. 6; which would argue against the authorship of the two works by the same figure. Against these considerations, however, we must also weigh the fact that Bareau, at least, considers Vasumitra to belong to the earliest layer of the doxographic traditions he examines; Bareau 20-21, Nattier and Prebish 246. Certainly, there are reasons to think that the apparently earliest version of the text, the *Shiba bu lun* T2032, dates to around Kumārajīva's time, even if it may not necessarily be a translation by Kumārajīva himself, as Demiéville thinks: it mentions Kumārajīva's name, T2032.17c29; and speaks of Chinese as "the language of Qin (秦言), 18a14; Demiéville further adduces in support of this attribution the belief of Jizang that it was Kumārajīva's work; "Les versions" 48 n. 1.

[1309] Roth, "Particular Features" 85, 91-92; apparently based upon a rather early estimate of the date of Kaniṣka. Roth's judgements apply to the Bāmiyān Vinaya fragment; the citations in the *Śikṣāsamuccaya* (which apparently attests only one relevant form, however); the *Bhikṣuṇī-Vinaya*; and the *Abhisamācārikā*

however, this would still not make any of the works concerned early enough for us to be sure they predate early Mahāyāna texts, and we must also bear in mind that the Chinese *terminus ad quem* for these works is in no case much earlier than 400 C.E. We must therefore also exercise caution in drawing conclusions about earlier periods with regard to the *Vinaya,*[1310] *Prātimokṣa,* and *Bhikṣuṇīvinaya.* This ground for caution extends beyond Vinaya works to other works among the sources listed above for which the Chinese *terminus ad quem* falls in the same approximate period:[1311] the *Śāriputraparipṛcchā;*[1312] the *Śāriputrâbhidharma* and the *Ekottarâgama.* Finally, as we have already noted, it is possible that material was still being added to the *Mahāvastu* itself up until about the same period, so that it, too, is not necessarily a reliable witness for the doctrine of any period earlier than approx. the fourth century.[1313]

Dharmā; and also to the *Prātimokṣa,* with the distinction that in the latter case, he sees the evolution of a more "supra-regional" form of Prakrit suited to "the professional language of the disciplinary law", which cannot be localised so easily as the dialect of the other texts, and which he seems to see as belonging to a slightly later phase.

[1310] Note that Nattier and Prebish state, without giving any reasons or sources, that the "Chinese version of the Mahāsāṃghika Vinaya . . . might be stated to be somewhat later than the Sanskrit original", 242, which, if verifiable, might place the Sanskrit version of the text early enough to be of interest in the present study.

[1311] Indeed, it is perhaps not insignificant that there seems to have been a sudden spate of translation into Chinese from Mahāsāṃghika sources, or of sources testifying to the currency of Mahāsāṃghika ideas, between 380 and 430. We might read this fact as suggesting that the school was particularly influential at the time, noting of course, once more, that this is very late in the piece for the purposes of the history that concerns us here.

[1312] Considered by Bareau to have been the earliest of the sectarian treatises, and additionally of interest because it reputedly adopts a Mahāsāṃghika perspective itself; but nonetheless still late for our purposes, dating perhaps only to 300 CE; Bareau 17, 21, Nattier and Prebish 266.

[1313] Luis Gómez in Eliade's *Encyclopedia of Religion,* s.v. "Mahāsāṃghika"; "Although the oldest portions of this work must go back to the early stages of the formation of canonical Buddhism, it contains numerous late interpolations that place the extant recension in the fifth century C.E." On the complex stratification in the text, see Jones, III, ix-xv. I presume that Gómez's source for this late closing date is Jones's similar assertion, similarly unsourced, in his *Mahāvastu* I, xi. One of Jones's reasons for making this assertion may be his understanding that it mentions by name the Yogācāra as a school, I, xiii, 94; and also, more broadly, that the doctrine of ten *bhūmis,* on which it contains a section where this comment occurs, is a Mahāyāna doctrine. To this we may add considerations close to the present study. In one passage, when the Buddha Dīpaṃkara is seen by a throng of *devas,* they exclaim "Behold the Dharma!", I, 192; where Jones adopts Horner's suggestion that this refers to the identification of the Buddha with the Dharma after the "Vakkali" model. This suggestion is reinforced by the fact that the text immediately goes on to speak of Dīpaṃkara in terms of what we have seen elsewhere in this study is a prevalent

It will be perceived that this leaves us with precious little evidence indeed upon which to evaluate supposed Mahāsāṃghika ideas in the earlier period that is our proper concern here. One rare exception to the general tendency for the extant sources on Mahāsāṃghika doctrine to be relatively late is the *Fenbie gongde lun*, T1507, which as we have seen is supposed by the Chinese catalogues to date to the latter Han, and which we also saw above Lamotte considers half-Mahāsāṃghika, half Mahāyāna. The value of this possibly early witness is lessened, of course, by the fact that it is not possible to identify it solely with Mahāsāṃghika, but nonetheless, we will return below to the question of what this text might suggest about ideas associated with the school.

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model of *dharmakāya,* viz. the eighteen *āveṇikadharmas,* which it couples with the description of his body in terms of a developed set of marks, 192-193. At Jones's II, 142-143, where the prince is immune to the temptations of his nubile harem because of his insight, his translation seems to obscure what looks like a reference to an idiosyncratic and perhaps prototypical doctrine of the *dharmakāya* as the unchanging, quiescent essence of mutable and active phenomena, an "understanding" (*saṃjñā*) or conception which is the "opposite" (*viparīta*) to the usual one that leads to vulnerability to lust and intoxication (*edṛśī me tāta viparītasaṃjñā bhavati. yathāyaṃ kāyo yatra yukto āgacchati gacchati yatra sthāti niṣīdati yatra bhāvayati tūṣṇīṃ bhavati yatra bāhiraṃ śūnyaṃ nirīhakaṃ balaṃ durbalaṃ māyā ca visaṃvādakaṃ sarvam eva dharmakāyaṃ pravadanti,* Senart II, 147). When Śākyamuni Buddha sets the wheel of Dharma in motion, the text says, "the Lion-man had . . . appeared, embodied in *dharma*" (*narasiṃhasya dharmakāyam upasthitaṃ,* Jones III, 339, translation modified; Jones's fn. 4 here is full of anachronism and baseless assumptions). (A further supposed instance of *dharmakāya* at Senart III, 452, Jones III, 453 is apparently not supported by the manuscripts, and I cannot enter into these textual problems here.) We must note, of course, that as Jones observes, the text does not seem to know (or at least admit) *trikāya* doctrine, III, 339 n. 4; neither does it know *rūpakāya;* it does remember the "body born of mother and father" in the precise sense that it appears in the DN 2 pericope to which I trace it, for which see below §4.3.4, a fact to the implications of which we shall return shortly. The fact that it *does* know even this much of a *dharmakāya,* however, and that apparently by that very name, presents us with a pair of alternatives with regard to the dating of at least the passages concerned. As we will see elsewhere in this study (§4.5.2), it seems from the Chinese record, at least, that the concept of *dharmakāya* by that name cannot be firmly traced any earlier than translation texts of approx. the 240s CE, which, allowing for time for composition, transmission to China and translation, means that the conjunction of concept and term may date perhaps to 200 CE. Thus, we either have to speculate that *Mahāvastu* passages cited here, and thus aspects of embodiment doctrine in the text, are later than that period, or else we have to suppose that they represent the earliest instance I have been able to find of the doctrine they evince, and thus suggest something of the origin of the concept. While there are of course no cast-iron *a priori* criteria by which we can resolve such a dilemma, the former would be the less remarkable possibility, and it seems to me that we can say against the latter that the incidental and scarcely coherent way these passages adduce the concept make it difficult to imagine they represent the scene of its first elaboration.

Third, we must bear in mind the possibility, if not indeed the probability, of distortion, where the texts to which we turn for our knowledge of the ideas that interest us are written from a known or even an avowed perspective that is committed to the orthodoxy of other schools, schools which moreover are hostile to Mahāsāṃghika doctrine.[1314] While this is not a reason to eliminate works from consideration entirely, it is a reason to exercise caution in our use of them, caution which has often been lacking in previous studies. This is particularly the case with polemical material contained in doctrinal compendia and with the characterisations of Mahāsāṃghika found in the literature of the Sarvâstivāda school, which we know to have been committed to a basically anti-docetistic stance. On these grounds, must exercise caution, even if we were not to exclude them entirely, with regard to the works of Vasumitra;[1315] the *Vibhāṣā*; works derived from Vasumitra, such as those of Paramārtha and Jizang,[1316] and the *Mañjuśrīparipṛcchā;* Bhavya; and Vinītadeva.

[1314] A very striking example of this hostility may be found in the (presumably slanderous) charges of absolutely outrageous incest, patricide, monk-killing, matricide, incontinent ejaculation etc. leveled at Mahādeva, the figure supposed to have provoked the first schism (noting, of course, that with patricide, schism-mongering is one of the five *anantarya* sins), presented for instance in the *Vibhāṣā* T1545.510c24-512a20, translated in Mair, "An Asian Story of the Oedipus Type" 20-26 (note that Mair incorrectly identifies the source as "Chapter" 99). Some of the same charges also appear in the Sarvâstivāda-derived (i.e. via "Vasumitra") accounts of Paramārtha and Jizang, for which see Demiéville, "L'origine" 30-31, 34-35; it is notable that these charges seem by this point to have stuck so firmly that they are repeated even by Paramārtha, who at the same time wants to make the Mahāsāṃghika founded by Mahādeva into an early authority and warrant for Mahāyāna, and whose polemical purposes the charges would therefore not seem to serve.

[1315] La Vallée Poussin notes some of the difficulties with Vasumitra in particular, observing for example that the doctrines attributed by it to the Mahāsāṃghika are incoherent; "Appendice" 775. Lamotte says that Vasumitra's "information" is "factitious"; *History* 532. On Vasumitra and problems using him uncritically, see also Schopen, "On the Buddha and his Bones" 160.

[1316] Demiéville is typically perceptive on this score, and notes more than once that Paramārtha, for example, had his own agendas, e.g. to show that "certain ideas of the Greater Vehicle go back as far as the epoch of Aśoka", 19, 24; perhaps to perceive in the doctrines supposedly at stake in the schisms producing certain subschools echoes (and warrants) for ideas (e.g. Prajñāpāramitā, Vijñaptimātra) closer to home in Paramārtha's own time and context, 21, 23.

When we take into account these three grounds for exclusion of sources from the present study, or at least caution in their use, we are left with only a small number of sources that are relevant to the study of the docetistic *lokôttaravāda* ideas, are likely to be early enough to bear even probably on the history we are considering here, and/or are not presented from an opposing or external viewpoint, we arrive at the following small set of sources that seem to provide us with the best hope of triangulating on the Mahāsāṃghika espousal of the *lokôttaravāda* ideas that concern us here: the *Mahāvastu* and Vasumitra's treatise on the schools, and to a lesser extent, the **Mahāvibhāṣā,* the *Ekottarâgama* and the *Fenbie gongde lun.* In what follows, I will consider what each of them tells us in turn about Mahāsāṃghika allegiance to *lokôttaravāda* ideas, and argue that while, between them, these sources suffice to show beyond much reasonable doubt that a school variously called Mahāsāṃghika or Lokôttaravāda subscribed to such ideas by about the fourth century, they do not suffice to establish that the school necessarily subscribed to those ideas before that time. This means, I will argue, that we cannot be sure that the school was in fact, as has been thought to date, the *source* of those ideas, as comparison with the certainly earlier *Lokânuvartanā-sūtra* will show.

4.2.4 The *Mahāvastu* as a source for the ascription of *lokôttaravāda* ideas to the Mahāsāṃghika

We turn first to the consideration of the *Mahāvastu* (MV). MV, I contend, must, for want of anything better, be our first resort in consideration of the basis for ascribing *lokôttaravāda* ideas to the Mahāsāṃghika/Lokôttaravāda school, for the following reasons: (1) its colophon identifies it as a text of this school, and this ascription is supported by text-internal considerations; (2) even if it remains relatively late, given the possibility that material was added to it through to the fourth century, it is the earliest material we have that is so clearly self-identified as belonging to the school; (3) we have the Sanskrit, so that problems of translation do not intervene.

As is frequently noted, MV in fact devotes very little space to the doctrines that are most famously "Lokôttaravāda".[1317] In the most important passage in this regard, the text gives a series of verses which set out a number of respects in which they are *lokôttara* and yet put on the semblance of various worldly states and qualities.[1318] Many of these verses are duplicated in the *Lokânuvartanā-sūtra* (LAn),[1319] and we will consider them closely in the context of our consideration of that text below, since it is firmly attested at a much earlier date than the MV parallels, and thus must take precedence for the purposes of the history that concerns us here. In order to avoid unnecessary duplication, therefore, I will merely summarily mention the salient points of content here. For ease of cross-reference, I will refer to the salient verses by the number of the verse in the Tibetan version of LAn, as below, in addition to giving the number of the verse assigned it by Harrison.

Thus, the Buddhas are pure, but they make a show of maintaining hygiene in various ways (v. 9, 10, 11; Tib. 29, 30, 31); they are immune to all harms, weakness and mishap, but they make a show of illness, childish foolishness, ignorance, old age etc. (v. 14, 20, 21, 24, 25; Tib. 16, 21, 34, 35, 45); they do not require sustenance, but make a show of it (v. 16; Tib. 32); they merely show other bodily functions, like the growth and shaving of hair, the wearing of garments etc. (v. 18, 19; Tib. 41, 42); they are not really born as they appear to be, and thus escape the defilements of

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[1317] Barth, for example, writing immediately upon Senart's publication of the text, remarked upon the paucity of fresh information the text yields about either the Lokôttaravādins or the Mahāsāṃghikas; review of Senart, 462-465.

[1318] Jones I, 132-134, corresponding to Senart 167-170. Note that the relevant verses have been edited and translated afresh by Harrison in "Sanskrit Fragments", where they are presented with parallels in the Tibetan and Chinese *Lokânuvartanā-sūtra*; Harrison's paper is thus a much better source than either Senart or Jones for the study of these parts of the *Mahāvastu*.

[1319] Fourteen verses out of twenty-six in MV identified by Harrison as relevant to *lokôttaravāda* doctrine. with partial further overlap in themes with some other verses not explicitly noted as such by Harrison.

conception, gestation in the womb, etc. (v. 22; Tib. 15); they are free from lust and therefore do not reproduce, but make a show of having a son (as Rāhula) (v. 23; Tib. 20); they make a show of meditating even though they are in fact already in a state of unsurpassable wisdom (v. 26; Tib. 24).

Other details of the MV presentation of the Buddha's *lokôttara* status here are not paralleled in LAn. Here I will merely give the verse number assigned by Harrison, since no Tibetan parallel verse exists in each case, but I will note in the footnotes some cases in which the ideas are partly paralleled in LAn.

Thus, the Buddha's conduct[1320] and *kuśalamūla* (root of good) is *lokôttara,* as is his walking, standing, sitting and lying down (v. 2, 8);[1321] his body is *lokôttara* (v. 3); the way he wears robes and eats food is *lokôttara* (v. 4; cf. v. 16, 18 already mentioned above); they make a show of "discovering" the Dharma which is in fact timeless (v. 6); they wear clothing though invulnerable to the wind, and sit in the shade though invulnerable to the sun (v. 12);[1322] they are invulnerable to *karma,* but make a show of undergoing it (v. 15);[1323] they make a show of drinking though they do not need it (v. 17).

We also find some other scattered traces of *lokôttaravāda* ideas in the text. Most generally, the term *lokôttara* and the abstract assertion of related ideas are scattered in a few places in the text.

[1320] For a similar theme in LAn, cf. Tib v. 10, T807.751b26-27, for which see below n. 1388.

[1321] For a similar idea with regard to sitting etc., see Tib. 39, T807.752 a22-23.

[1322] Cf. Tib. 40, T807.752a24-25. On a display of wearing clothes where it is in fact unnecessary, see also Tib. 41, 752a26-27.

[1323] Cf. Tib. 59, T807.752, c02-04.

The vision of the Buddhas is said to be *lokôttara,* as is everything pertaining to them.[1324] *Bodhisattvas* can lapse on the third *bhūmi* and fail to graduate to the fourth if, among other faults, they teach that the Buddha is of the world and not *lokôttara*.[1325] The Buddha is qualified by the epithet *lokôttara* more than once elsewhere in the text.[1326] Perhaps the most extended sense in which the text dwells on *lokôttaravāda* relates to the process by which the *bodhisattva* comes into the world in his last incarnation. The text mentions that when the Buddha-to-be Dīpaṃkara enters his mother's womb he takes the form of a white elephant,[1327] though it does not say the same of Śākyamuni. A *bodhisattva* both does and does not have a position in his mother's womb, and he does not hurt his mother while in the womb, despite assuming a series of postures unusual for one in such circumstances. A *bodhisattva* is not begotten of his parents' intercourse, but of his own nature and spontaneously (*svaguṇanirvṛttā upapādukā*).[1328] Dīpaṃkara, standing in presumably for *bodhisattvas* in general, is not polluted during his time in the womb,[1329] nor by anything about the process of birth.[1330] A *bodhisattva* emerges from the right side of his mother, without piercing it.[1331] A few moments in the subsequent biography of the *bodhisattva* and Buddha are also embellished with *lokôttara* themes. *Bodhisattvas* do not

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[1324] *na hi kiṃ cit samyaksaṃbuddhānāṃ lokena samaṃ atha khalu sarvam eva maharṣiṇāṃ lokôttaraṃ tathā hi samyaksaṃbuddhānāṃ samudāgamaḥ so pi lokottaro tat ca samyaksaṃbuddhānāṃ mānsacakṣuṣaḥ*, Jones I, 125.

[1325] *bhāṣanti samyaksaṃbuddhāṃ ca lokasamatāye deśenti na ca samyaksaṃbuddhāṃ lokottarā iti,* Jones I, 76, Senart I, 96.

[1326] Jones II 209, *lokôttarasya loke aparimitayaśasya lokanāthasya . . . . lokottaro*; I 41, *lokôttarasya buddhasya śākyamunino bhagavato*; I 45, *lokôttarasya buddhasya guruṇo;* I 78, *lokātītaṃ.*

[1327] Jones I, 162, 164.

[1328] Jones I, 114-115.

[1329] Jones I, 169.

[1330] Jones I, 173.

[1331] Jones I, 114-118, 173-174. This is because *bodhisattvas* are born with a *rūpa* that is "made of mind", *manomaya*! I, 174, *manomayena rūpeṇa prādurbhonti tathāgatā*. It seems that Māra has not been informed of this development, given his taunts to the *bodhisattva* (for which see n. 596)!

indulge in sense-pleasures, and nonetheless, Rāhula is born after passing from Tuṣita Heaven into the womb of his mother.[1332] When Dīpaṃkara renounces the world, his transformation into monastic guise is described as spontaneous and miraculous.[1333] The Buddha sits under the shade of a tree although "exalted Buddhas are untiring of body and mind".[1334]

We thus see that the classification of MV as a Mahāsāṃghika-Lokôttaravāda text seems to be justified, insofar as it does indeed contain, in a number of places, ideas that reasonably match the label *lokôttaravāda.*[1335]

We must note, however, that most of these ideas are concentrated in the narrow compass of the verse series sequence by Harrison in light of its parallels in the *Lokânuvartanā-sūtra.* Outside that extended passage, the range and importance of *lokôttaravāda*-related ideas mentioned is quite small, boiling down almost entirely to doctrines about the *bodhisattva's* conception, gestation and birth; the desultory application of the epithet *lokôttaravāda* to the Buddha; and a handful of moments in the Buddha's biography spoken of in terms of the *lokôttaravāda* theme.

In light of this unbalanced concentration of most of the *lokôttaravāda* ideas in one short passage, we must be mindful of apposite comments made by Paul Harrison. Harrison notes that the most intensely *lokôttaravāda* verse sequence sits somewhat unnaturally in its present place in

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[1332] Jones I, 121.

[1333] Jones I, 183.

[1334] *akilantakāyā buddhā bhagavanto akilantacittā,* Jones III, 301. Note, however, that while the text feels obliged to exuse the fact that the Buddha appears to rest, it passes over *without* comment the fact that he bathes.

[1335] Though, as we have already seen, it is also not unambiguous on this score; when the Buddha sits under the *bodhi* tree, Māra scorns him for his "gross" body, "born of father and mother", "grain-fed", etc., after the model of DN 2. See above, fn. 593-596 and the paragraph to which those notes are appended.

MV,[1336] and his observation that the sequence of verses is more logical in LAn than in MV. On this basis, Harrison concludes that it is likely that the verses we borrowed *from* LAn to MV: "Here and elsewhere the MV betrays itself as a pastiche – and a clumsy one at that – in which verses have been taken from, or based on the LAn."[1337] We arguably have no way of knowing *when* this borrowing took place, and we must consider the possibility that it the *lokôttaravāda* verse sequence may have been a late addition to the text, post-dating the version of LAn attested by Lokakṣema.[1338] Given the extreme difference in the concentration and even specific nature of the *lokôttaravāda* ideas contained in this chunk of text apparently imported from elsewhere, and the very diluted smattering of such ideas in the remainder of the text, this further leads us to the possibility that *lokôttaravāda* ideas remained a relatively artificial graft upon a text where they really had relatively little business, and of course, we have no way of knowing the provenance and date of the identification of the text as "Mahāsāṃghika-Lokôttaravāda" in its colophons etc., which could be a product of the same grafting process or even a later addition based upon an identification inferred from the presence of this very passage.

1336 "Sanskrit Sources" 219.

1337 "Sanskrit Sources" 224. See also "Some Reflections" 1.

1338 I feel I must take exception, therefore, when Harrison goes on, immediately after the comment just cited, to say that the verses were probably taken from LAn "either in the form in which we now have it, or, more probably, in an *earlier* redaction" (my emphasis). He gives no grounds for this judgment, and it seems to me that here Harrison may betray the influence of the assumption that schools are earlier than the Mahāyāna and in all cases material common to both is probably later in the Mahāyāna version; since LAn is a Mahāyāna text, and since we can see that MV is not likely based upon the version of the text we see translated by Lokakṣema, we must explain the differences by imagining that Lokakṣema's LAn has developed from an older version attested by the school text, MV. There is no *a priori* reason I can see, however, why the differences between the two versions of the shared material cannot be explained by the hypothesis that MV borrowed from a *later* version of LAn than Lokakṣema translated, and indeed, this hypothesis would have the advantage of sticking closer to the relative dates our extant record suggests, and not thereby going out on a speculative limb that unnecessarily projects the ideas shared by the two texts into a murky hypothetical past necessitated by the supposition that MV represents a supposedly earlier version of the ideas, where we in fact have no other evidence that the ideas existed much earlier than LAn.

Thus, despite the genuine presence of *lokôttaravāda* ideas in the text, MV is rather weak evidence upon which to construct a case that "the Mahāsāṃghika" were the *originators* of those ideas. Parts of the text may be as late as the fourth century; *lokôttaravāda* ideas are scant in the text apart from one relatively short section; and it seems most likely that this section was incorporated into the text from a known outside source, the LAn.

As we shall now see, there also are other reasons to question the idea that MV gives us any representative image of a "Lokôttaravāda" or Mahāsāṃghika school. In order to understand those reasons, however, we must look at our other most important source for the characterisation of *lokôttaravāda* ideas – the doxographies, and particularly the most detailed and earliest among them, Vasumitra's treatise.

4.2.5 Vasumitra's *Samayabhedôparacanacakra* and other doxographies as a source for the ascription of *lokôttaravāda* ideas to the Mahāsāṃghika

We turn next to the information about *lokôttaravāda* ideas contained in the doxographical works, with an emphasis on Vasumitra's treatise.

Bareau lists[1339] a number of theses relating to the supramundanity of the Buddha attributed in common to the Mahāsāṃghikas in general and to their subsects, the Ekavyāvahārikas, the Lokôttaravadin and the Kukkuṭikas. Some of these theses are at times also attributed to the Andhakas and the Gokulikas (similarly subsects of the Mahāsāṃghikas, but of the "southern" branch).[1340] Bareau calls these theses specifically *lokôttaravāda* in the sense that they "present

[1339] Bareau, *Les sectes* 76-77.

[1340] It appears to me that Paul Harrison must misread Bareau, or Bareau his sources, when he states confidently that characteristically *lokôttaravāda* ideas were common property of *all* Mahāsāṃghika sects, and "were no doubt also held by those southern branches of the school . . . such as the Andhakas;" "Sanskrit Sources" 227-228. Vasumitra, who is Bareau's most important source, being the earliest and

the Buddha, and to some extent *bodhisattvas,* as supramundane".[1341] Bareau's list gives us a good starting point for examining the basis in doxographies for the claim that Mahāsāṃghika propounded *lokôttaravāda* ideas.

According to Bareau,[1342] two of these theses (1 and 20) are corroborated by the *Kathāvatthu,* where they are ascribed to the Andhaka, i.e. a branch of the "Southern" Mahāsāṃghika, and the geographic spread of this attribution may argue for the centrality of these theses to the doctrinal profile of the school. Others are corroborated by Bhavya (2, 17, 18), Vinītadeva (3, 6, 8, 12, 14, 15) or both (1, 16, 19), and though we have to remember that those sources are significantly later, their corroboration may indicate that these theses were particularly well-known of or central to some branch of the school. Thus, in order of the extent to which they are corroborated by multiple and widespread sources and from doctrines attributed earliest to latest, the propositions attributed to the Lokôttaravādins/Mahāsāṃghikas that may merit the term *lokôttaravāda* as we are using it here are (given by the number of each thesis in Vasumitra):

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most detailed, in fact most specifically does *not* ascribe to any southern subsect any of the doctrines picked out here, after Bareau, as pertaining to *lokôttaravāda* Buddhalogy, and indeed, as we shall see, it is notable that of the twenty *lokôttaravāda* theses listed below, only two (1 and 20) are ascribed to Andhakas in any source. In addition, the thesis Bareau numbers 5 ("the word of the Buddha is supramundane") after *Kathāvatthu* is *lokôttaravāda,* though Bareau does not list it among *lokôttaravāda* theses (presumably because it is not ascribed in this precise form to *the* Lokôttaravāda, see Bareau 90). See below for a suggestion that thesis 56 may also echo *lokôttaravāda* themes. If anything, then, it is striking how *small* a role is played, among a long list of theses ascribed to the Andhakas by the *Kathāvatthu,* by anything recognisable as *lokôttaravāda*. The fact that some such ideas are nonetheless ascribed to them, and that in the *Kathāvatthu,* which we have by an independent transmission tradition and which presumably thereby attests to a significant and reliable fact, is important, but the balance of our evidence surely indicates that *lokôttaravāda* ideas were most likely far less significant in the south, and scarcely constitutes a basis for speculation about the role of those ideas in a Mahāsāṃghika-Andhaka influence on the emergent Mahāyāna, as Harrison seems to suggest in the speculations that follow his comment (bearing on the development of the Prajñāpāramitā in the south etc., 228).

[1341] Bareau adopts this definition despite the fact that he has just cited the very different Paramārtha definition, already noted above, without comment, and without any indication that he sees different ideas at play.

[1342] Summarising and reorganising information given in Bareau, *Les sectes* 76-77.

All four sources (ascribed to Andhakas in *Kathāvatthu*), i.e. north and south alike:

1. The Buddhas are supramundane (*lokôttara*).[1343]

Vasumitra, *Kathāvatthu* (ascribed to Andhakas) and Bhavya, i.e. north and south alike:

20. A *bodhisattva* can be born at will into lower destinies (*durgati*), by the power of his vow, for the benefit of sentient beings.

Vasumitra, Bhavya and Vinītadeva; all remaining theses are ascribed only to "northern" subsects:

16. When *bodhisattvas* enter their mother's womb, they do not pass through the embryonic phase or the other phases of gestation.[1344]
19. *Bodhisattvas* do not experience thoughts of desire, anger or violence.

Vasumitra and Bhavya:

2. Tathāgatas are free of taints/outflows (*āsrava*).
17. When entering his mother's womb, a *bodhisattva* assumes the form of a white elephant.
18. All *bodhisattvas* are born from the right side of their mothers.

[1343] It is odd that though Bareau cites *Kathāvatthu* II, 8 as a source of the ascription of this idea to the Andhakas, 76 n. 4, he does not, so far as I can see, list it among the theses of the Andhakas themselves, 89-98.

[1344] In the earliest Chinese translation alone, we read in place of this item that "the *bodhisattva* is not attached to/does not desire his mother's womb" 菩薩不愛母胎, T2032.18b18-19.

Vasumitra and Vinītadeva:

3. All words spoken by the Tathāgatas turn the wheel of Dharma.

6. The *rūpakāya* of the Tathāgata is limitless/infinite.[1345]

8. The Buddha's lifespan is limitless.

12. The Buddha never actually speaks, because he is always in *samādhi,* but sentient beings, believing that he does so, rejoice in his preaching.[1346]

14. The Buddha knows all things (*sarvadharma*) with the wisdom attaching to a single moment of mind (*ekakṣaṇacittasaṃprayuktaprajñā*) (cf. no. 13 below).

[1345] An apparent partial parallel to this notion, which does not specify the *rūpakāya,* may be found in Tib. LAn 92b, *sku lus dpag tu med min* [*sic*] *yang*. I suspect corruption in the Tib. text, since it does not seem to make any sense to me, in the larger logic of LAn, as a whole, to say that "the body of the Tathāgata is *not* illimitable, and yet he manifests it as having a limit", *dpad tu yod par stong mdzad pa*. This Tib. is not paralleled in Lokakṣema's Chinese.

Note also, in connection with this thesis, that Demiéville has pointed out a passage from the commentary on Vasumitra ascribed to Paramārtha, preserved in Kuiji's *Shu ji,* that comments on the sixth tenet Vasumitra ascribes to the Mahāsāṃghika, namely that the *rūpakāya* of the Tathāgata is without limit. X844.578c05-11, Demiéville, "L'origine" 63-64. This comment, however, is clearly made in the terms of a later *trikāya* understanding, and so is only of interest for what it shows about the later mentality of its time.

We might further note, in light of evidence marshaled about the date and provenance of the concept of *rūpakāya* below (§4.5.3), that: (1) if this work were by the same Vasumitra who wrote the *Vibhāṣā,* it would be odd that he would be using the term *rūpakāya* of the Tathāgata's body where the *Vibhāṣā* clearly favours "body of birth"; (2) in this case, we might perhaps speculate that he is respecting the terminology of a rival school, in which case this might be an indication that the term was current among the Mahāsāṃghika *before* it was current among Sarvâstivādins; (3) if, as the Chinese record indicates, the term *rūpakāya* was not current prior to the period represented by the translations of Dharmarakṣa, use of the term *rūpakāya* should indicate that the present treatise is not earlier than that same period, unless we are to posit that we see here an instance of the term earlier than anything witnessed elsewhere in the Chinese record.

[1346] This tenet seems to be matched by a passage in Lokakṣema's Ch. LAn that is not obviously paralleled even in Tib., nor in any surely Mahāsāṃghika source that I know of: 佛想計本悉斷常不離三昧。現人爲說若干種經法。隨世間習俗而入。示現如是, T807.752b29-c01 (corresponding in the sequence of the text to the very different v. 58, *chos rnams sems can med pa dang// shin tu dngos po med mkhyen la// sems can mang po 'dul mdzad pa// 'di ni 'jig rten mthun 'jug yin.*)

15. Special knowledge of the destruction (of taints) (*kṣayajñāna*) and special knowledge of their not arising again thereafter (*anutpādajñāna*)[1347] operate uninterruptedly in the case of a Buddha until the Buddha enters into final *nirvāṇa*.

Vasumitra only:

4. The Buddha teaches all *dharmas* in a single sound.
5. There is nothing untrue in the Buddha's teaching.[1348]
7. The supernatural power (*prabhāva*)[1349] of the Buddha is limitless/infinite.
9. The Buddha never tires of awakening pure faith in sentient beings in order to convert them.
10. The Buddha does not sleep or dream.
11. The Tathāgata does not pause [need to reflect] in answering a question.

1347 We will see below that these two kinds of *jñāna* are central to definitions of the *dharmakāya* in terms of gnosis in the Sarvâstivāda literature; see §4.4.8.

1348 Note that this tenet, also, might find a remote match in LAn: 佛所語無有異說, T807.752c21. In LAn, however, this is said in an unclear contrast to the fact that the Buddha nonetheless teaches the four noble truths separately, as if there is something provisional or false about the teaching of the four noble truths: 四諦法隨人所解而說。隨世間習俗而入。示現如是, 752c21-22. LAn Tib. is not much help here, since the corresponding verse, 67, which seems to match Ch. insofar as it speaks of "teaching the four noble truths in accordance with the minds of sentient beings", says rather something quite confusing about the Buddhas "even making a show of telling lies(?)": *sems can bsam pa ji bzhin du// 'phags pa'i bden pa ston mdzad cing// brdzun par yang ni ston mdzad pa// 'di ni 'jig rten mthun 'jug yin.* Perhaps what all these different snippets are getting at, including Vasumitra's tenet, is that the Buddha always speaks the ultimate truth, even though he makes a show of using expedient means and uttering part-truths in order to meet the limited capacities of sentient beings, with particular reference to the teachings of the "lesser" vehicle?

1349 In the earliest Chinese translation only, his *light* is limitless: 光明無量, T2032.18b14. Does this perhaps result from a simple confusion on the part of the Qin translator between *prabhāva* and *prabhā/prabhāsa*? Or, considering the fact that the Qin version of this doctrine seems to be paralleled by Lokakṣema's LAn (for which see n. 1423 below), is it alternatively possible that Paramārtha and Xuanzang reflect a corruption of the Skt. text in the other direction? Note that the same idea is also found in LAn Tib. v. 92a, *sangs rgyas 'od ni dpag med*, but in a context where it is not matched in Ch.

13. The Buddha understands all things (*sarvadharma*) in a single moment of thought (*ekakṣaṇacitta*).

Finally, according to Bareau, two theses related to *lokôttaravāda* ideas are found attributed to the Lokôttaravādins only in other, later sources:

Bhavya, Thesis 4: The words of the Buddhas manifest their essence (*garbha*).

Vinītadeva, Thesis 2: The Buddhas have substantial (*dravya*) existence.

We might also mention the following theses from Bareau's reprise of the Andhaka (southern) school of Mahāsāṃghika, which, though not named "Lokôttaravāda" and not mentioned in Bareau's summary of *lokôttaravāda* ideas, certainly answer to the definition of *lokôttaravāda* as we are using the term here, and thus demonstrate further (to theses 1 and 20 above, also shared with the Andhakas) that such ideas were, to a certain extent, the common property of all Mahāsāṃghika subsects:

5. The word of the Buddha is supramundane.[1350]

56. The excrement and urine of the Buddha far surpass all other perfumes.[1351]

As Tsukamoto Keishō notes, "the contents and structure of [Xuanzang's] text does (*sic*) not differ substantially from those of the other two Chinese versions by Kumārajīva and

[1350] Bareau, *Les sectes* 90.

[1351] Bareau, *Les sectes* 96.

Paramārtha".[1352] This means that we can be confident these tenets were attached to the Mahāsāṃghika in the mind of Sarvâstivādin doxographers as early as the fourth century.

The comparison between this composite doxographical picture of the *lokôttaravāda* ideas ascribed to various branches of the Mahāsāṃghika and MV, the flagship extant "in-house" text of the Mahāsāṃghika, poses a problem:[1353] the overlap between the profile of *lokôttaravāda* ideas we found above in MV, and the ideas yielded by the examination of Vasumitra and other doxographies, is only very partial at best. We can summarise the overlap and divergences between the picture of Mahāsāṃghika *lokôttaravāda* ideas that emerges from MV and the doxographies as follows.

Both MV and the doxographers attest that Mahāsāṃghikas of some stripe ascribed to the *lokôttaravāda* ideas that: the Buddha is, generally, *lokôttara* (Vasumitra Thesis 1); and that the conception, gestation and birth of *bodhisattvas* is marked by various supernatural and exceptional acts and features, is pure, and does not defile the *bodhisattva* (Vasumitra Theses 16-18). In addition, we might admit that, while it is not matched to the letter in MV, the spirit is also matched of Vasumitra's thesis that the Buddha is free of taints/outflows (*āsrava;* Thesis 2). We might also understand Bareau's Thesis 56 of the Andhakas after *Kathāvatthu,* that the excrement and urine of the Buddha far surpass all other perfumes, to be in keeping with the spirit if not the word of the absolute purity attributed to the Buddha in MV. We can also note, finally, that MV does indeed hold that the Buddha's *samādhi* is unbroken, though Vasumitra's corollary that he does not speak is not given.[1354]

[1352] *Cycle of the Formation* 87. I have noted above variations in the earliest Chinese translation for theses 7 and 16; see n. 1344 and 1349.

[1353] This problem has not, to my knowledge, been noted or studied in the prior literature.

[1354] Jones I 243, *yam āhu ānantariyaṃ samādhiṃ.*

This comparison furnishes us with a small set of *lokôttaravāda* ideas found in both the doxographical characterisations of Mahāsāṃghika and in MV itself, which we might thus regard as the most solidly established core of Mahāsāṃghika *lokôttaravāda* doctrine. We might summarise these ideas by noting that they revolve primarily around the idea that the Buddha is utterly pure, and particularly vivid detail and care in applying this basic principle to the facts of a *bodhisattva's* conception, gestation and birth. The only idea that does not fit under this rubric among the shared ideas is that the Buddha's *samādhi* is unbroken.

In this connection, it is relevant to note that the only real respect in which the characterisations of Mahāsāṃghika doctrine in the **Mahāvibhāṣā* could really be said to bear upon *lokôttaravāda* ideas[1355] also revolves around these same questions of purity and birth. According to *Vibh*, the Mahāsāṃghika hold that the Buddha's body is completely pure

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[1355] The fact that the evidence provided by *Vibh* for Mahāsāṃghika docetism is so limited, in conjunction with its overtly Sarvâstivāda viewpoint, make it surprising it is cited so much as evidence of Mahāsāṃghika *lokôttaravāda* doctrine. The *Vibhāṣā* further mentions Mahāsāṃghika a few times, but mostly on rather technical points that have little relevance to the questions that concern us here. Thus, JñP holds that the "foremost *dharma* in the world" (世第一法) is associated with the *rūpadhātu,* T1544.918a18-20; and in commenting on this, *Vibh* notes briefly that an opposing Mahāsāṃghika opinion holds that it is proper to the *kāma-* and *rūpadhātu*; T1545.14a06-08. In commenting on a JñP question about whether it is possible for a single awareness (智, **jñāna, *bodhi*) to know all *dharmas,* T1544.919b09, a Mahāsāṃghika opinion is cited and refuted that it is the self-nature of awareness to apprehend (能了), and that it apprehends both itself and other things just as a lamp illuminates both itself and other things; T1545.42c12-14, 42c27-28, 43c04-14. In the context of a discussion of a JñP assertion that two states of mind cannot mutually cause one another, T1544.919b13-14, a Mahāsāṃghika opinion is cited that one *pudgala* (person) can have two states of mind arise simultaneously; T1545.47b01-03, 47b26-c03. In discussing a JñP definition of "heterogeneous cause", T1544.920c27-29, *Vibh* cites and refutes a Mahāsāṃghika opinion that it is to be understood as applying only to *citta* and *caitāsikadharmas* T1545.96a27-29 (see n. 1904 for part of this discussion). In discussing a JñP topic about the meaning of the term "to turn the wheel of Dharma", T1544.1018c06, a Mahāsāṃghika opinion is cited that the *dharmacakra* takes [the Buddha's] speech for its *svabhāva,* and that all the words of the Buddha are *dharmacakra*, T1545.912b07-09; this obviously relates, rather tangentially, to our concerns here in that we can see links between the idea that all the Buddha's speech is absolute truth and the idea that he is utterly supramundane, but it adds nothing to the consideration of the historical questions that are our main focus. The Mahāsāṃghika opinion that the *śrotâpanna* can backslide (cf. the five tenets supposed to have precipitated the original schism) is cited and refuted, T1545.931b22-24, 933c26-28.

("without taint/'outflows'", *anāsrava*);[1356] they are supposed to have cited, in support of this claim, a scriptural passage that stated that the Buddha was born and grew in the world, but was not tainted by worldly *dharmas.*[1357] We can also note that these ideas feature in EA 6, one of the main places where *lokôttaravāda* ideas feature in the reputedly Mahāsāṃghika *Ekôttarâgama.*[1358] They also feature fleetingly among the restricted number of ideas that could be called *lokottarvāda* in the "half Mahāsāṃghika" *Fenbie gongde lun.*[1359] We can also note that they feature among the theses attested by the largest number of doxographers in addition to Vasumitra, as an examination of the summary listing given above will confirm.

It is also noteworthy, in this connection, that outside the sequence of intensively *lokôttaravāda* verses shared with and probably borrowed from LAn, the *lokôttaravāda* doctrine of MV also focuses noticeably on the birth of the *bodhisattva* and his perfect and enduring purity

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[1356] T1545.229a16-19, 391c27-392a01, 871c02-05.

[1357] E.g. 經言如來生在世間長在世間。若行若住不爲世法之所染污, T1545.229a17-19; with slight variations, see also 391c29-392a01, 871c04-05. The most likely scriptural source I know of for this assertion is the (Chinese) *Ekôttarâgama* text T125.764b21-29. This text partially corresponds to AN 8.1.1.5 and 8.1.1.6., both entitled *Lokadhamma-sutta.* In both sets of texts, Nikāya and Āgama, "eight worldly conditions" (世間八法) are listed: gain, loss, fame, obscurity, praise, blame, pleasure and pain. In both versions, ordinary worldlings are said to be subject to these. The difference between versions lies is in the state contrasted to the state of the ordinary worldling. The Nikāyas opposes to it the state of the "noble disciple" (*ariyasāvaka*), who likewise is heir to these states, but they reflect of each that it is "impermanent, painful, and subject to change", and therefore are free of *dukkha*. The Āgama, by contrast, here substitutes the Tathāgata, who, like the lotus born of the mud and yet pure and fresh, and not dirtied by foul water, undergoes conception, gestation etc. in order to acquire the Buddha-body [and yet is not besmirched by this experience]; etc. Remembering that EA is said to be from the *sūtrapiṭaka* of the Mahāsāṃghikas, it seems highly likely that this is indeed the source from which the Sarvâstivādin's Mahāsāṃghika opponents cited. For AN, see Woodward and Hare IV, 107-109.

[1358] 如來身者。爲是父母所造耶。此亦不可思議。所以然者。如來身者。清淨無穢受諸天氣。爲是人所造耶。此亦不可思議。所以然者。以過人行。如來身者。爲是大身。此亦不可思議。所以然者。如來身者。不可造作。非諸天所及, T125.657b15-20. For a loose translation, see Akanuma, "Triple Body" 16.

[1359] 佛身金剛無有諸漏, T1507.35c16-17. However, we must weigh this against the outright attribution to the Buddha, elsewhere in the text, of a "body bequeathed by father and mother" (resonant with the DN2-derived Sarvâstivāda "body born of father and mother", **mātṛpitṛsāṃbhavikakāya,* for which see §4.4.4), also described as a "fleshly body" (肉身); 1507.50b02-11.

throughout the process, as we saw above. Apart from the general application of the epithet *lokôttara,* the only dimensions of *lokôttaravāda* we noted above outside that sequence in the text that do not fall under this rubric are: the explanation of how Rāhula was born while the *bodhisattva* nonetheless maintained chastity (which arguably falls under the same broad themes of avoiding pollution by sexual conduct and substances); the miraculous assumption of monastic guise by Dīpaṃkara; and the assurance that just because the Buddha sat in the shade, that does not mean he was tired.

To my mind, the fact that this concern with the *bodhisattva's* relation to reproduction processes and his pollution or purity dominates in such a range of sources would seem to indicate that it may be considered the truest core we know of *lokôttaravāda* doctrine as it can be attributed to the Mahāsāṃghikas. We will return to the implications of this observation below, after we have had the opportunity to observe dimensions of supposed Mahāsāṃghika doctrine apart from this core, as a point of contrast.

When we compare the doxographical sources and MV, it seems that if anything, the bulk of the *lokôttaravāda* ideas ascribed to the Mahāsāṃghika by the doxographers are *not* evidenced independently by MV, or by any other possibly Mahāsāṃghika text. Thus, turning now to ideas found only in the doxographies, we should note first that the following *lokôttaravāda* ideas are not found in MV: theses relating to the nature of the Buddha's word (Vasumitra Theses 3, 4, 5, and the *Kathāvatthu's* Thesis 5 of the Andhakas; Bhavya's Thesis 4);[1360] the Buddha's *rūpakāya* is infinite (Thesis 6), or similarly, that his power (or "light") and lifespan are infinite (Theses 7 & 8); doctrines relating to the Buddha's service of sentient beings (Theses 9, 20); theses relating to

[1360] Although cf. "[his voice] is not untruthful, nor false, but truthful and apposite", *yathātathā avikalpitā buddhasya sakhilā girā;* Jones I, 263. Note that otherwise, these propositions are significantly not even among the numerous qualities of the Buddha's voice listed at Jones I, 134-136, 263 ff.

his special gnosis (Theses 11, 13-15);[1361] and the thesis that he is immune to the three poisons (Thesis 19). Finally, we also do not find Vinītadeva's thesis that the Buddhas exist in substance (*dravya*).

As for Vasumitra's Thesis 10, that the Buddha does not sleep or dream, this would seem to be almost directly contradicted (though we might perhaps split hairs and differentiate between the *bodhisattva* and the Buddha, a move which would itself go against the spirit of *lokôttaravāda* ideas) by MV when it says that the *bodhisattva* had five great dreams.[1362]

We might note that there is thus a clearly observable pattern in the relation between the theses attributed to the Mahāsāṃghikas by the various doxographers and the contents of MV. With the sole exception of the partial match between Vasumitra's Thesis 12 and the MV statement that the Buddha is always in *samādhi*,[1363] all the theses listed that do not appear in MV are listed either by a single doxographer only, or by the combination of Vasumitra and Vinītadeva, as a comparison with the summary list above will confirm. By contrast, as we have already observed, theses found in Bhavya and at least one other doxographer, or in the *Kathāvatthu* and at least one other doxographer, are all separately confirmed by MV. This failure of confirmation from other sources might make us question the reliability of Vasumitra and Vinītadeva, in particular, on the supposed theses of the Mahāsāṃghika.

Of course, more than one explanation is conceivable for the discrepancies in this direction between Mahāsāṃghika *lokôttaravāda* doctrine as it appears in MV and the doxographies.

[1361] Terms such as *kakṣaṇa, kṣayajñāna* and *anutpādajñāna,* are not found anywhere in the text.

[1362] Jones II, 131.

[1363] Already cited n. 1354.

First, it is possible that the relevant portions of MV are relatively early, and that by the time evidenced by the doxographers, Mahāsāṃghika doctrine had undergone further developments, which the doxographers recorded but which otherwise happen no longer to be extant in any Mahāsāṃghika text.

Second, we might attribute these differences to the different genres of the texts in question, and the presumably different concerns that animate them. MV, though it is nominally part of the Vinaya, is predominantly a *jātaka/avadāna* text in nature, and as such, less likely to enter into scholastic niceties. The doxographers, by contrast, write in a scholastic context, and with a particular eye to the doctrinal controversies that were presumably engaged between Mahāsāṃghika schoolmen and their rivals in other schools. We simply no longer have any texts e.g. from a hypothetical Mahāsāṃghika Abhidharma to compare to the assertions of Vasumitra et al.

To both of these considerations, it might be objected that MV is late enough, and interested enough in matters of doctrine, to expound at length on the ten stages of the *bodhisattva* path. This objection, however, does not clinch the matter, and date and genre could still explain the differences at issue.

At the very least, however, we should note that there are significant differences between the way Mahāsāṃghika *lokôttaravāda* ideas are presented in the little apparently Mahāsāṃghika material available to us, and the ideas ascribed to the Mahāsāṃghikas in the doxographies. We should take special note of the single difference most relevant to the questions under study

here: MV contains no special doctrine relating to the *rūpakāya*,[1364] though Vasumitra and Vinītadeva (and, following Vasumitra, Jizang and Paramārtha) ascribe to them the idea that the *rūpakāya* is infinite. Unfortunately, too little is said about this doctrine in Vasumitra, and Jizang and Paramārtha are, in my opinion, too distant from the historical era at issue, for us to know much about the significance of this difference.

The differences between MV and Vasumitra et al. become still more notable when we examine the question from the other side, and consider those ideas found in MV that have no parallels even among the numerous theses attributed to the Mahāsāṃghikas by the doxographers. The doxographers make no mention of the following MV *lokôttaravāda* MV ideas. They say nothing about the way Rāhula is conceived or born, or the Buddha's relation to domestic life. They say nothing about the miraculous or spontaneous nature of a Buddha's transformation into monastic guise, where MV does mention this point in connection with Dīpaṃkara. While the doxographies do say that the Buddha is *lokôttara,* they do not say that anything specific about him is *lokôttara,* where MV specifies this of his vision; of his walking, standing, sitting and lying down; of his body(!); of his wearing of robes and eating of food, and so on. This is related to a final difference, most significant for our purposes: the doxographers show no sign of attributing to Mahāsāṃghika the key doctrine, of "conforming to the world" (*lokânuvartanā*), whereas, as we have seen, the verse sequence MV shares with LAn rings rich changes on this theme: the Buddha puts on a show to conform to the world in his hygiene, his apparent weaknesses, his bodily functions (alimentation, hair, clothing), in meditating, and in "discovering" the Dharma. That is to say, it appears that the doxographers do not know what is, for our purposes, the very nub of the supposedly Mahāsāṃghika Buddhalogical innovation, i.e.

[1364] Though note that it does say that his "body" (of type unspecified) is *lokôttara*, as noted above (v. 3); cf. also EA, cited below n. 1369. Several passages also appear to feature an unremarkable version of the emergent notion of the *dharmakāya,* as already noted above n. 1313.

their docetism proper, in the sense that they are supposed to claim that the Buddha's existence in the world was merely a show.

It is to be noted that with the minor exceptions of details about Rāhula and Dīpaṃkara's assumption of monastic garb, all of these doctrines unique to MV among our sources for knowledge of Mahāsāṃghika *lokôttaravāda* ideas are concentrated in one single verse sequence, and are otherwise unknown even to MV itself. Further, as we will see below, these ideas are shared, in many cases verbatim, with LAn, which is earlier, which Harrison regards as the source of the borrowing of these verses into MV, and in which the theme is developed at much greater length. We will return to the implications of these facts in following subsections of our argument.

What, then, are we to make of these differences between MV and the doxographers in this direction?

We should note, first, that we cannot have our explanatory cake and eat it too. If we are to explain what is present in the doxographers but absent in MV by speculating that MV is earlier and the doxographic accounts represent a more developed version of Mahāsāṃghika doctrine, then we cannot at the same time explain what is *present* in MV but absent in the doxographers by imagining that the doxographers were somehow historically unaware of it. Further, in this case, if we imagine e.g. that MV is *later* than the doxographers, and thus that the doxographers miss this heart of docetism because it had not yet developed when they wrote, we will simultaneously rule out of court the likelihood that the Mahāsāṃghika were in possession of the docetistic idea early enough to influence similar Mahāyāna conceptions, since we can scarcely imagine that the doxographers are earlier than an MV which is somehow in its turn

nonetheless still earlier than the phase of Buddhist history evidenced by Lokakṣema's translations!

We should therefore consider that were the truly docetistic doctrine, that is, of the Buddha's life and body as a show, truly both Mahāsāṃghika and early enough to have influenced the development of similar or derived Mahāyāna ideas, we would expect it to certainly have been present and known of them at the time that even Vasumitra, the earliest doxographer, was writing. It would thus be bizarre, to say the least, that Vasumitra, who otherwise so conscientiously and exhaustively lists other theses of the Mahāsāṃghikas (to the tune of over forty in all, including those irrelevant to *lokôttaravāda* ideas), does not breathe a word of this most remarkable and ostensibly central doctrine. Indeed, this fact appears even more strange when we consider that were Vasumitra indeed the Sarvâstivādin author scholarly opinion holds him to be, we would expect him to take particular exception to such a doctrine, given the staunch insistence on the genuinely worldly status of the Buddha's body in his final incarnation evidenced in the *Vibhāṣā* (supposedly even a work of the same hand!),[1365] and therefore to be hardly likely to pass over it in silence.

The other explanatory possibilities that are open to us, if we are to retain Mahāsāṃghika authorship of docetistic doctrine and still somehow explain Vasumitra's silence on the notion of *lokânuvartanā,* are scarcely more palatable. For example, we might imagine that the Mahāsāṃghika were indeed the earliest authors of the docetistic conceit, but that somehow, by the time Vasumitra came to write, this concept had become so unimportant to them that it escaped his notice. This would mean, of course, that our *only* evidence for this supposed earlier

[1365] For that matter, it is also remarkable, if the Mahāsāṃghika were the genuine authors of the truly docetistic notion of "conformity with the world" and elaborated that idea early enough to influence early Mahāyāna Buddhalogy, that we similarly find no trace of this idea in the *Vibhāṣā* itself, despite the fact that *Vibh* is clearly willing to engage the Mahāsāṃghika in detail on other fine points of doctrine.

phase of Mahāsāṃghika doctrine would be MV itself, and it alone hardly constitutes a sound enough basis upon which to construct so important a moment in early doctrinal history. Alternatively, we might imagine that the doctrine was indeed central to Mahāsāṃghika doctrine, and was still so in the doxographer Vasumitra's time and was known to him, but that his disregard of it is somehow an artefact of a particular bias in his attention, as if he selected only those doctrines that were relevant to particular kinds of dispute. To think so much, however, is not in keeping with the apparently exhaustive ambitions of Vasumitra's work as a whole, or of the genre of doxography *per se*; and, so far as I can see, we would also be hard pressed to come up with a plausible set of concerns in conformity with which we could hypothesise Vasumitra would omit the "conformity with the world" conceit, but include the grab-bag of other theses he does list.

To summarise the results of this comparative consideration of MV and the doxographical accounts of Mahāsāṃghika *lokôttaravāda* ideas, then: (1) it appears that there is a solid core of *lokôttaravāda* doctrine found in all sources that holds the Buddha to have been absolutely pure and exempt from pollution, and which further applied this notion to develop a particular concept of the process of a *bodhisattva's* conception, gestation and birth; (2) the majority of Vasumitra's theses are either attested only in Vasumitra himself and derivative sources, or only shared with Vinītadeva, including all doctrines about the special qualities of the Buddha's teaching, the infinity or limitless nature of a Buddha in various respects, and his special gnostic or cognitive attributes; (3) conversely, MV features a pronounced emphasis on specifying of detailed aspects of the Buddha's being and actions, rather than just of Buddhas generally, that they are in fact *lokôttara,* and further, that appearances to the contrary are "in conformity with the world"; (4) these most pronounced unique features of MV's *lokôttaravāda* ideas are shared with, and indeed probably borrowed from, LAn, as we shall see in more detail momentarily; (5)

these discrepancies between our various sources might lead us to question either or both the veracity with which Vasumitra and Vinītadeva, in particular, represent Mahāsāṃghika doctrine, on the one hand, and/or the extent to which the MV verse sequence shared with LAn is representative of any broader Mahāsāṃghika tendencies, on the other.

For the purposes of our present analysis, therefore, I contend that many of the theses unique to only Vasumitra, Bhavya, Vinītadeva or the *Kathāvatthu,* or shared only by Vasumitra and Vinītadeva, which are identified by Bareau as pertaining to *lokôttaravāda,* are best eliminated from the discussion as distracting irrelevancies. These ideas are only attested relatively late, even where they appear in Vasumitra; they are attested in sources external to Mahāsāṃghika itself, and therefore may partly be the products of sectarian viewpoints and rivalries we can only understand obscurely at best; and they are unsupported by other sources. They thus constitute too weak a basis for us to conclude anything about the Mahāsāṃghika at the period that concerns us here. Further, when we consider the relatively solid, simpler core of docetistic/*lokôttaravāda* ideas that remain to the Mahāsāṃghika even after we bracket these propositions out, we still have enough material to work with, so that elimination of this profusion of potentially irrelevant distractions threatens to do our analysis little harm.

4.2.6 *Lokôttaravāda* ideas in the *Ekôttarâgama* and the *Fenbie gongde lun*

Before we turn to the detailed examination of the *lokôttaravāda* ideas of LAn, and therefore to the further explanation of (4) in this list, it remains, for the sake of completeness, to note that some independent confirmation of Mahāsāṃghika subscription to other specific *lokôttaravāda* ideas is to be found in two sources we have considered only intermittently above, namely the *Ekôttarâgama* (EA) and the *Fenbie gongde lun.* We may wish to add these details to the relatively solid core of Mahāsāṃghika ideas that we will carry forward for use in later stages of our

analysis, though we must recall, of course, that EA, in particular, is possibly in parts as late as MV and Vasumitra, and therefore also already quite late for our present purposes. I will merely list these ideas for the reader's reference, and where relevant, will refer back to these points in the context of later discussion.

Ekôttarâgama:

(1) The Tathāgata's lifespan is long or infinite;[1366] shared not with any of the Mahāsāṃghika sources examined thus far, but, perhaps significantly, with LAn.[1367] EA further ascribes this extremely long lifespan to the Buddha in his *dharmakāya*.[1368]

(2) The Tathāgata's body is illimitable;[1369] cf. Vasumitra's thesis no. 6.

(3) The Tathāgata's wisdom or cognition is beyond the understanding and reach of ordinary humans.[1370]

Fenbie gongde lun:[1371]

[1366] 如來壽爲短耶。此亦不可思議。所以然者。如來有四神足。如來爲長壽耶。此亦不可思議。所以然者。然復如來故興世間周旋。與善權方便相應, T125.657b20-23.

[1367] T807y.753b11-12; in sequence this matches Tib. 91, though the content seems rather different: *de bzhin gshegs pas dus kun du// chos ni gnas par rab mkhyen kyang// chos kyi 'khor lo rab skor ba// 'di ni 'jig rten mthun 'jug yin//* We will return to this important verse below.

[1368] 我釋迦文佛壽命極長。所以然者。肉身雖取滅度。法身存在, T125.787b27-28. Note the opposition of the *dharmakāya* to a "fleshly body", which as we will see immediately below is also a feature of the *Fenbie gongde lun*.

[1369] 如來身者。不可摸則。不可言長・言短, T125.657b24; see also Akanuma, "Triple Body" 16.

[1370] 如來智慧・辯才不可思議。非世間人民之所能及。如是佛境界不可思議, T125.657b25-27. I include this proposition here because it matches in spirit the theses given by Vasumitra that ascribe infinite cognitive powers to the Buddha. However, despite the fact that the context here is much expanded by comparison to the Nikāya analogue (AN 4.77, *Acinteyya-sutta;* Woodward and Hare II, 89-90), the present sentence matches almost verbatim the Pāli *buddhānaṃ bhikkhave buddhavisayo acinteyyo na cintetabbo, yaṃ cintento ummādassa vighātassa bhāgī assa.* It may not therefore represent a specifically Mahāsāṃghika idea.

(1) The Tathāgata's lifespan of eighty years is merely a show in conformity with worldlings;[1372] cf. EA (1) above, and LAn.

(2) The Tathāgata's body is like adamant, and without taint.[1373] For the adamantine body of the Tathāgata, not matched in any of the sources we have looked at above, cf. LAn.[1374]

We should also note, however, that the *Fenbie gongde lun* contains at least one passage that presents an unusual doctrine of bodies which does not sound at all *lokôttaravāda,* but rather

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[1371] Recall that this text takes the form of a commentary on EA. Although it is ascribed to the Han by the catalogues, which should make it impossible that it is a commentary on the Chinese translation of EA, which is due to Saṃghadeva (fl. 383-398), there are some odd verbatim correspondences between the wording of passages in both texts: 迦葉思惟正法本, T125.549b19, 1507.30a23; 即擊揵椎集四部, T125.549b23, T1507.30c11-12; 以脫縛著處福田, T125.549b24, T1507.30c09. It is conceivable, I suppose, that *Fenbie gongde lun* is therefore also a work of Saṃghadeva, or some slightly later translator who had access to the Chinese version of his work, and that the attribution was lost between the time of its translation and that of the complication of Sengyou's catalogue. T1507 certainly does appear in Sengyou's catalogue, however: It is certainly the same text as Sengyou's 分別功德經, in five *juan,* described by Sengyou as a commentary on EA T2145.21c13; the colophon to T1507 cites this comment by Sengyou to correct its notion of the authorship (as distinguished from the translatorship) of the text T1507.52c21-22. If T1507 is in fact by Saṃghadeva or someone later, however, then it is obviously a long time after the Han dynasty, and any value it might have thereby had as an early witness to *lokôttaravāda* ideas, and perhaps even to Mahāsāṃghika espousal of same, is lost, and it becomes merely one minor witness among several we have to the state of affairs in the fourth century. It may be noted, in this connection, that given its notion of the "body bequeathed by father and mother" (for which see immediately below n. 1375), it would make more sense if it dated to roughly the same period as the ideas of embodiment in the *Vibhāṣā*; were it a genuine Han text, we would otherwise have to suppose that it was espousing this notion of embodiment in isolation significantly before it is attested in Sarvâstivādin sources.

[1372] 如來隨世欲適眾生。不現其異故壽八十, T1507.45c22-23.

[1373] 佛身金剛無有諸漏, T1507.35c16-17; 如來身者金剛之數。不可敗壞, T1507.37c12.

[1374] 佛身如金剛淨潔無瑕穢無清便, T807.752a08-09, Tib. 33, *sku mkhregs rdo rje 'dra ba'i phyir// zag pa dag ni mi mnga' . . .* We will return to this important passage below in §4.2.9.

echoes, if anything, the Sarvâstivāda position on the contrast between the *dharmakāya* and a "body of birth" (for which see below, §4.4.4).[1375]

We now turn to the main focus of this section of this dissertation, the examination of our earliest evidence of *lokôttaravāda,* docetistic ideas of the Buddha's person, and related doctrines of his embodiments, as found in Lokakṣema's LAn.

4.2.7 *Lokôttaravāda* ideas in the *Lokânuvartanā-sūtra*: the Buddha's person and acts

With these complex preliminary considerations out of the way, the ground is now clear for us to turn to the consideration of the *Lokânuvartanā-sūtra* (T807; LAn)[1376] without the obfuscating clutter to our view created by preconceptions that the *lokôttaravāda* ideas in the text must be derived from a putative Mahāsāṃghika context. In fact, this extraordinarily rich and largely neglected little text is clearly and by far the earliest extant source we possess for these ideas, and to assume that the text itself belongs to a supposed Lokôttaravāda school at this date, on the sole basis of the *lokôttaravāda* ideas it contains, is precisely to beg the question. Further, as we shall see in the course of our analysis below, the content of LAn goes significantly beyond anything attributed or attributable to the Mahāsāṃghika or Lokôttaravāda in any extant text,

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[1375] The Buddha goes to see his father, the king, and the king comes to meet him. The Buddha, knowing that the king is intent on prostrating himself to the Buddha and not wishing this, performs a miracle so that he rises in the air to where his feet are level with the king's head, in order that the king can pay respects without abasing himself. The text then asks whether the body in which he does so is a body of *ṛddhipāda/abhijñā* (神足身) or the "body bequeathed by father and mother" (遺體/父母遺體身); the reply is that it is not a body of *ṛddhipāda.* The text then goes on to say, "The Tathāgata has two bodies: (1) the *dharmakāya* (法身); (2) the fleshly body" (肉身); these are further qualified as "the fleshly body golden in colour" (金色肉身) and the "taintless (*anāsrava*) *dharmakāya* (無漏法身); T1507.50a21-b11. The term "fleshly body" is otherwise unusual; the term "body bequeathed by father and mother" recalls the Sarvâstivāda doctrine of the body to be opposed to the *dharmakāya,* which, as I show below, was not in fact the *rūpakāya* at all (at least down to the *Vibhāṣā*). In these senses, the description of this body recalls the DN 2 given body as described in the "snake slough" model immediately prior to the elaboration of the *manomayakāya,* and is in marked contrast to any supposed Mahāsāṃghika docetism.

[1376] On this text, see Harrison, "Sanskrit Sources"; for a further summary of many of its doctrines, especially in the first half, see Harrison, "Some Reflections", esp. 4-7.

even setting aside the various problems with the use of those sources for the period of history that concerns us here as examined above. The most plausible reading of the text is therefore that it does *not* belong to a simply Mahāsāṃghika or Lokôttaravāda context, at least insofar as we are capable of characterising those doctrinal affiliations at all on the basis of the available evidence. I will argue, therefore, that the extant evidential record as a whole, including LAn, does not support the version of events, standard to date, whereby the docetistic notions we are here calling *lokôttaravāda* originate in the Mahāsāṃghika or even in any Mainstream context, but rather that, for all we know, these ideas may equally be Mahāyāna from the very get-go, and in fact, that it is a more economical reading of the evidence to think that they are.

In what follows, I will first summarise the *lokôttaravāda* ideas found in the text. I will then note some important doctrines of the Buddha's embodiment, which are witnessed in this text as early or earlier than any other instance known to me of the same ideas, and which are further paralleled seldom or not at all in other Mahāsāṃghika sources or doxographical descriptions of the Mahāsāṃghika. Finally, I will also examine a significant portion of the text that contains recognisably Mahāyāna "metaphysical" concepts as developed as anything to be found in the same period. I will argue that these Mahāyāna conceptions are not merely lumped together by some redactional or editorial chance with *lokôttaravāda* ideas in the text, but in fact, that the *lokôttaravāda* ideas are intimately related to the metaphysics referred to by the text.

On the basis of these arguments, I will suggest that the specifically docetistic conception of the Buddha's final earthly lifetime evidenced in this text is in fact richer, better motivated, and already clearly related to other significant notions of about the Buddha's embodiments in this text. By contrast, as we saw above, a subset of the same ideas sits somewhat uneasily and artificially in the context of the *Mahāvastu,* and further, these ideas are almost entirely confined

to the portion of the text MV probably borrowed from LAn itself, and appear nowhere else in our sources on the Mahāsāṃghika. I will therefore argue that we have no sound reasons to continue to believe, as scholars have done to date, that these ideas originate in a supposed "Lokôttaravāda" context, and indeed, that the most economical explanation of the evidence is that they probably originated in an early Mahāyāna context to which LAn and the passages borrowed therefrom in MV are our sole remaining witnesses.

In what follows, I will adopt a dual system of reference to LAn, to both Tibetan and Chinese versions of the text. The Chinese is only extant in Lokakṣema's translation of the late second century C.E., T807. The text is also extant in the Tibetan Kanjur,[1377] and for each citation I will also refer to the Tibetan version of the text by verse number, where relevant.[1378] Where they

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[1377] I used two versions of the text. I worked primarily from the sTog Palace version of the Tib., bKa 'gyur, mdo ste vol. *zha* 239a-246a = Arabic numeral pagination 477-491; for this text I had to work from pdf scans of the text from E. Gene Smith's Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center, which I accessed through the Harvard University Library web portal on 13 April 2007. I also checked the text against the Derge (sDe dge) version of the text, bKa' 'gyur, mdo ste vol. *tsha* 303a-308a = Arabic numeral pagination 605-615; for this text I also worked from TBRC pdfs, in this case from their CD Rom version of the bKa' 'gyur.

[1378] The Chinese is in prose, so it is, strictly speaking, misleading in the case of that version of the text of "verses", but I will adopt this convention for the sake of convenience in discussing both versions of the text together. I do not thereby mean to imply any priority for the Tibetan version – indeed, quite to the contrary, for our purposes the Lokakṣema version of the text is more important, since we can be sure of its early date. For the most part, there is a one-to-one match, in sequence, between a Tibetan verse and a Chinese equivalent, though in a number of cases the relationship, if any exists, between the two verses is difficult to discern, and the presumption of a match can only be made on the place in the surrounding sequence of verses that do match. In a minority of cases, though still for a significant number of verses, I could simply discern no match between Tibetan and Chinese at all, even on the slender basis of sequence, and in such cases, since they do not exist, I will obviously not cite Tibetan "parallels" to the Chinese. While there are also Tibetan verses to which no Chinese discernibly corresponds, they are less important for our purposes here, since we cannot know the date of the composition of the underlying text, and I will not discuss such instances very much in what follows. Where I cite the Tibetan, I will provide transliterated texts in the footnotes. I will note Derge variants from sTog in square brackets with the abbreviation "D:", with the exception of cases where there is variation between *'thun* and *mthun* in the regular refrain *'di ni 'jig rten 'thun 'jug yin = eṣā lokānuvart*[*t*]*anā.* This variation is even found throughout each separate version of the text, and does not effect the meaning, and so I have taken the liberty of not noting these variants only. For the convenience of readers who wish to check against the Tibetan texts, I here also provide a summary list of correspondences between page nos. and verse nos. for each version of the text. sTog: v. 1, 239a; v. 2-10, 239b; v. 10-18, 240a; v. 18-26, 240b; v. 26-35, 241a; v. 35-44, 241b; v. 44-52, 242a; v. 52-60, 242b; v. 60-70, 243a; v. 70-78, 243b; v. 78-86, 244a; v. 86-95, 244b; v. 95-104, 245a; v. 104-112, 245b; v. 112-113 (end), 246a. Derge: v. 1-2, 303a; v. 2-14, 303b; v. 14-25, 304a; v. 25-36, 304b; v. 37-48, 305a; v. 48-59, 305b; v. 59-69, 306a; v. 69-80, 306b; v. 80-91, 307a; v. 91-103, 307b; v. 103-113 (end), 308a.

exist, I will also make reference to Sanskrit equivalents from the *Mahāvastu* (Mv), which I cite from the edition of Harrison.[1379] Throughout, though I employ these various versions of the text, I take Lokakṣema as the primary object of study, since it is the Lokakṣema version that is associated with the early date that makes this text such an important link in the study of the development of *lokôttaravāda* ideas and their relation to the doctrine of embodiments. It is not my aim to translate the text, but rather to give a paraphrase and summary of relevant points.[1380]

We turn first, then, to the specifically *lokôttaravāda* ideas found in the text. Once more, by *lokôttaravāda* I mean not tenets ascribed to the Lokôttaravāda school in doxography, but, according to the stipulative definition laid out above, ideas that hold that the Buddha is in fact utterly supramundane, and that any appearance he gives of being worldly is therefore a docetistic show. The bulk of these ideas are concentrated in the first part of the text, i.e. Tib v. 1-55,[1381] which, as Paul Harrison observes, focuses on the person of the Buddha, where the

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[1379] In "Sanskrit Fragments". MV verse numbers given here correspond to the numbers given by Harrison to verses in the sequence for the purposes of his study.

[1380] Readers who would like a closer translation at least for the verses studied by Harrison are referred to his "Sanskrit Fragments", where he translates all verses separately for Skt., Tib. and Ch. My approach here will necessarily entail leaving many textual problems unsolved. Where the text is too difficult to readily yield a secure sense of its general import, I will omit it from discussion; I believe there is ample material to work with for current purposes in the portions of the text that are clear. Lokakṣema's wording here is as difficult and frequently opaque as it is in other texts translated by him dealt with in this dissertation. A full and authoritative study of this text would doubtless involve the establishment of critical editions of Chinese and Tibetan texts, and then the painstaking study of each in light of the other, of the MV Sanskrit parallels where they exist, and other relevant textual materials. Such work would be invaluable, but I do not have the expertise for parts of such an endeavour, and even those parts of it that might lie within my reach would require an expenditure of time impossible within the framework of the current project. I also believe that the field of Buddhist Studies unfortunately cannot afford to wait for each of its texts to reach such an ideal state of preparation before we use the texts to try and construct an account of doctrinal history. There are simply too many texts untapped, and too few scholars, to imagine that any such conditions could be reached within my lifetime, at least.

[1381] Corresponding roughly to T807.751b15-752b26

remainder of the text focuses on his Dharma.[1382] As we have already seen above, fourteen verses of twenty-six in the "conformity with the world" (*lokânuvartanā*) sequence in MV are shared almost verbatim with LAn,[1383] and at least five other verses correspond more or less loosely to further LAn verses in their content;[1384] we have thus already touched on the content of eighteen verses in the course of discussing MV above.

For convenience, we can arrange the *lokôttaravāda* ideas featuring in the text under the head of several more general categories.[1385]

Thus, LAn features some general assertions that the Buddhas are *lokôttara*.[1386] The Buddhas appear in the world, but they are not touched by the world (do not attach to the world), but merely act in order to "illuminate" the world (Tib. v. 9).[1387] All their acts of body, speech and mind are merely in conformity with the world (or *lokôttara*, Tib.; v. 10).[1388]

[1382] Harrison, "Sanskrit Fragments" 212.

[1383] See p. 619.

[1384] See n. 1320, 1321, 1322, 1323.

[1385] The following summary is intended to be representative rather than exhaustive. We should also not, in particular, that in some of the "verses" in Lokakṣema's Chinese, the refrain 隨世間習俗而入 = Skt. *eṣā lokānuvarttanā* appears, which would seem to make the verse relevant for our present purposes, but its connection with the other content of the "verse" is tenuous; see e.g. Ch. to Tib. v. 10, 751b26-27; to Tib. v. 12, 751b27-28. I have not used such verses, since it has been my general method to use only the parts of the text where I feel the meaning is reasonably unambiguous.

[1386] Cf. similar themes in Harrison's MV v. 2.

[1387] 佛何緣現世間。何因當別知。雖在世間皆不著。悉爲世間作明, T807.751b24-25. *'jig rten du ni 'jig rten sgron// rnam par 'dren pa rnams 'byung yang// 'jig rten dang ni 'dres med pa* [D *la*]*// 'jig rten du yang snang ba ston//*

[1388] 身所行口所言心所念。隨世間習俗而入。行內事行, T807.751b26-27. *sku dang sku yi 'phrin las dang// gsung gi gang dag brjod pa dang// yid dang yid kyi rnam rtog rnams// rgyal pa'i thams cad 'jig rten 'das//*

One important application of the docetistic theme, as in many of our Mahāsāṃghika sources above, is to the purity of the Buddha, and in particular, his freedom from the taint of sexual processes or conduct. Buddhas are not born of sexual intercourse of their parents, but their bodies are made by magical transformation (化作), and they make a display of having parents in the manner of a mirage (譬如幻示現父母) (Tib. v. 15).[1389] The Buddha "casts light on the men of the ten directions [where they languish] in the darkness of concupiscence", and yet he makes a show in conformity with the world of having a wife and son (Tib. v. 20).[1390] The Buddha is also pure in the sense that he is not defiled by bodily evacuation, in which context it is said that his body is like adamant (Tib. v. 33).[1391] We might also see the same broad concern with purity at work in claims that the Buddha does not really need to engage in personal hygiene, but does so to conform to the world, as when he washes his feet (Tib. v. 29),[1392] washes his body (Tib. v. 30),[1393] and cleans his teeth (Tib. v. 31).[1394] It is possible that this is also a motivation

[1389]菩薩不從父母遘精而生。其身化作。譬如幻示現父母。隨世間習俗而入。示現如是, T807.751c02-03. Note that here the Chinese is much more specific about the particulars of the embodiment the Buddha does in fact have than Skt. and Tib. *na ca maithunasambhū taṃ sugatasya samuchrayam/mātāpitṛñ ca darśenti eṣā lokānuvarttanā//* MV 22. *bde bar gshegs pa rnams kyi sku// 'khrig pa las ni byung min la// yab dang yum yang ston mdzad pa// 'di ni 'jig rten 'thun 'jug yin.* On the Buddha's apparent progress through Māyā's womb, see also below n. 1447 and the discussion there.

[1390] 佛照明十方人於婬瞑中。隨世間習俗而入。亦復現妻子, T807.751c10-11. *dīpaṃkaram upādāya vītarāgas tathāgataḥ/rāhulaṃ putra darśenti eṣā lokānuvarttanā//* MV 23. *mar me mdzad nas bzung nas su// de bzhin gshegs pa 'dod chags bral//sgra gcan zin la sras zhes bsungs// 'di ni 'jig rten 'thun 'jug yin//* Cf. also the very similar Tib. v. 19, which seems to be without separate parallel in Ch: *'dod pa de dag rnam* [D: *rnams*] *smad de// 'dod pa'i rdzab las yang dag 'phags//'on kyang sras la sogs ston pa// 'di ni 'jig rten mthun 'jug yin//*

[1391] 佛身如金剛淨潔無瑕穢無清便。現人大小清便。隨世間習俗而入。示現如是, T807.752a08-09. *sku mkhregs rdo rje 'dra ba'i phyir// zag pa dag ni mi mnga' yang//gshang* [D: *bshang*] *ba'i sar ni gshegs mdzad pa// 'di ni 'jig rten mthun 'jug yin//* I will return to the significance of the assertion that the Buddha's body is like adamant below. Note the parallel with the same conjunction of ideas in the *Fenbie gongde lun,* already touched on above; see n. 1373.

[1392] 佛足譬如蓮花不受塵垢。佛洗足隨世間習俗而入。示現如是, T807.751c28-752a01. *pādām ca nāma dhovanti na caiṣāṃ sajate rajaḥ/ pādāḥ kamalapatrābhā eṣā lokānuvarttanā//* MV 9. *zhabs ni padma'i 'dab 'dra ste// de dag rdul kyis mi gos la// zhabs kyang 'khru par mdzad pa ni// 'di ni 'jig rten mthun 'jug yin//*

[1393] 佛身如金不受塵垢佛現入浴。隨世間習俗而入。示現如是, T807.752a02-03. *snāyanti nāma saṃbuddha na caiṣāṃ vidyate malo/bimbe kanakabimbābhe eṣā lokānuvarttanā//* MV 10. *de dag dri ma mi mnga' ste// sku ni gser kyi mdog 'dra yang//rdzogs pa'i sangs rgyas khrus mdzad pa// 'di ni 'jig rten mthun 'jug yin//*

behind the assertion that his shaving of his head was a mere show (recalling that the hair is also conceived of as a bodily waste, and the resultant ritual impurity of barbering) (Tib. v. 42).[1395]

The docetistic theme is also applied to the cognition and gnostic attainments of the Buddhas.[1396] One passage corresponding obliquely to passages in other texts states that the Buddhas wisdom and merit are without limit, but that they show them as limitable in conformity with the world.[1397] Buddhas make a show of childish ignorance, but in reality their wisdom is perfect and has been for innumerable *kalpas* (Tib. v. 16).[1398] Similarly, though they rightly declare upon birth that they are unsurpassed in all the world, and know "the *dharmas* of all the innumerable Buddhas of the ten directions", they make a show of "asking questions" (seeking out teachers)

[1394] 佛口中本淨潔譬如欝金之香。佛反以楊枝漱口。隨世間習俗而入。示現如是, T807.752a04-05. *dantapoṇaṃ ca sevanti mukhaṃ cotpalagandhikaṃ//* MV 11. *zhal ni padma'i dri ldan zhing// tshems ni dri med mu tig 'dra//'on kyang tshems shing gsol mdzad pa// 'di ni 'jig rten mthun 'jug yin//*

[1395] 佛頭未嘗墮髮法但示人。亦無有見持剃刀去者。隨世間習俗而入。示現如是, T807.752a28-29. *keśāṃ ca orupāyanti na caiṣāṃ chindate kṣuraḥ/keśā nīlāṃananibhā eṣā lokānuvarttanā//* MV 19. *spyi gtsug bltar ni mi mthong phyir// spu gris gcod* [D: *gcad*] *du yod med kyang//dbu 'dreg par ni ston mdzad pa// 'di ni 'jig rten mthun 'jug yin//*

[1396] Cf. on this general theme, though not on the specifics, Vasumitra Theses 12-15.

[1397] 佛智慧功德威神不可復計。佛現人限長短使人知之。隨世間習俗而入。示現如是, T807.753b13-14. Note the echoes of the doctrine of the two *saṃbhāra;* I suspect that in this respect, too, LAn here would represent a very early exemplar of these ideas, though cf. also *Ratnâvalī* Ch. 3. In the corresponding portion of the Tibetan, we get instead a verse already touched upon above for the fact that it is the only parallel found in any of the texts we have studied to Vasumitra's notion that the body and possibly the "light" of the Buddha are illimitable; for which see n. 1345, 1349.

[1398] 佛從數千萬億阿僧祇劫以來。成就般若波羅蜜。隨世間習俗而入。示現小兒, T807.751c08-09. *kalpakoṭīm asaṃkhyeyaṃ prajñāyā pāramiṃgatā/bālabhāvaṃ ca darśenti eṣā lokānuvarttanā//* MV 24. *bskal pa bya ba grangs med nas// shes rab pha rol phyin las byung//'on kyang byis pa nyid ston pa// 'di ni 'jig rten mthun 'jug yin//* Tib. here seems assert that [the Tathāgatas, presumably] are arisen *from* the perfection of wisdom, which resonates with Prajñāpāramitā claims, of course. But this claim is not matched in Skt. or Ch.

(Tib. v. 21, 53).[1399] They only make a show of considering some *dharmas* ineffable, and in fact, they know all *dharmas* of all times.[1400] They only make a show of teaching provisional teachings (?), whereas in fact they say nothing untrue or at variance from their other utterances.[1401] Their (wrongheaded) pursuit of austerities for six years is merely a show in conformity with the world (Tib. v. 22).[1402] They make a show of meditating, despite the fact that they already possess unsurpassed wisdom (Tib v. 24, 75).[1403]

The docetistic theme is also applied to all instances in which the Buddha's show any apparent weakness or frailty. Thus, the text asserts outright that his physical strength is infinite, and he could move [all] the *buddhakṣetra* of the ten directions with [a mere flick of] his big toe; similarly, he could fly in an instance to countless *buddhakṣetra;*[1404] but he nonetheless makes a

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[1399] 菩薩生墮地時自說言。天上天下無過我者。我當過度十方人。隨世間習俗而入。亦復問, T807.751c12-13. *aham agrā ti bhāṣitvā* (?) *asmiṃ loke sadevake/puna paryeṣanti tīrthe eṣā lokānuvarttanā//* MV 25. *lha dang bcas pa'i 'jig rten la// nga ni mchog ces bka' stsal pa//phyi nas chos ni tshol mdzad pa// 'di ni 'jig rten 'thun 'jug yin//* 佛悉曉了十方不可計諸佛所有經法。示現人反覆問。隨世間習俗而入。示現如是, T807.752b18-19. *skyab pa sangs rygas chos kun la// mi mkhyen pa ni mi mnga' yang// gzhan la yongs su 'dri mdzad pa// 'di ni 'jig rten mthun 'jug yin//*

[1400] 過去當來今現在經法佛悉知其本。佛示人可說有不可說。隨世間習俗而入。示現如是, T807.752c17-18. This does not seem to bear any obvious correspondence to the Tib. verse (65) in the corresponding place in sequence, which in any case I fail to understand very well.

[1401] See n. 1348, where we have already discussed this passage with reference to one of Vasumitra's tenets. Tibetan does not match or support this reading of the Chinese.

[1402]太子閻浮提坐樹下時。從是起去勤苦六年。隨世間習俗而入。示現人勤苦如是, T807.751c14-15. *thub chen 'dzam shing grib ma la// bzhugs te bsam gtan mdzad bstan pa// lo drug par du dka' spyod pa// 'di ni 'jig rten mthun 'jug yin//*

[1403] 佛智慧以成悉等無有能過者。隨世間習俗而入。得佛坐安隱。示現世間如是, 807.751c18-19 (Harrison is in error when he gives 751a, "Sanskrit Fragments" 223). *budhyitvā-m-atulaṃ bodhiṃ sarvasatvāna kāraṇā/ alpotsukatvaṃ pradarśenti eṣā lokānuvarttanā//* MV 26.*byang chub mtshung med sangs rgyas te// lhar bcas 'jig rten ston yin yang// thugs las chung ngu nyid ston pa// 'di ni 'jig rten mthun 'jug yin//* 諸佛心皆無所罣礙。未嘗離三昧時。現人生[var. 坐]念。隨世間習俗而入。示現如是, T807.753a09-10. Tib. differs somewhat: *sangs rgyas mkhyen pa chags mi mnga'// dus rnams kun tu mnyam gzhag kyang// dbang po rnams ni sped mdzad pa// 'di ni 'jig rten mthun 'jug yin//*

[1404] This assertion seems to be without parallel in Tib. 佛一念頃能飛至無央數佛刹而現疲極。隨世間習俗而入。示現如是, T807.752a16-17.

show of physical weakness and fatigue (Tib. v. 36).[1405] Elsewhere, the text asserts again that the Buddha's strength is "immeasurable", and contrasts this to the appearance he makes of "sitting, standing, walking, lying down, and going out" (Tib. v. 39).[1406] The Buddha could blow away the ocean with a single puff of his breath, but nonetheless makes a show of using an umbrella (Tib. v. 49).[1407] The Buddha only made a show of subduing Māra underneath the *bodhi* tree (Tib. v. 23);[1408] in fact, with a single moment of thought he could make it so that a thousand million gazillion Māras didn't even know where he was, and only makes a show of being bothered by Māra (Tib. v. 51).[1409] He only makes a show of being sick and needing medicine (Tib. v. 34),[1410] or of having backache and needing someone to preach in his stead (Tib. v. 76).[1411] He only makes a

[1405] Given its place in the text, it is likely this verse refers particularly to the frailty shown by the Buddha in old age, a theme also treated in v. 35. 佛力不可當持一指動十方佛刹。現人羸瘦疲極。隨世間習俗而入。示現如是, T807.752a14-15. *'jig rten khams ni dpag med pa* [D: *dpag tu med*] *// zhabs kyi mthe bos g.yo mdzad pa* [D: *la*]*// 'on kyang nyam chung ston mdzad pa// 'di ni 'jig rten mthun 'jug yin//*

[1406] 佛身力不可計。終無坐起行步臥出。現人坐起行步臥出。隨世間習俗而入。示現如是, T807.752a22-23. *de dag rtag tu mnyam bzhag la// 'greng dang bzhugs dang bzhud pa dang//de bzhin rnal* [D: *mnal*] *bar rnal bar* [D: *snang ba*] *yang//'di ni 'jig rten mthun 'jug yin//* I am not sure entirely why these bodily actions should be perceived as in contradiction to the Buddha's infinite strength, unless it is because they imply that he needs to actually do something to achieve ends which he can in fact achieve by no effort at all.

[1407] 佛持威神吹海水悉令枯竭。見天雨持傘蓋。隨世間習俗而入。示現如是, T807.752b13-15. *'dren pa rnams ni zhal dbugs kyis// rgya mtsho chen po skams mdzad kyang// char pa'i skyabs kyang rab 'dzin pa// 'di ni 'jig rten mthun 'jug yin//*

[1408] Here I am partly reading with the Tib., because the Ch. is not entirely clear to me; literally, all it says is that it was a show in conformity with the world when the Buddha, about to complete the path under the *bodhi* tree, "gave off light to inform Māra of [the fact]", 佛道欲成時於樹下獨坐。隨世間習俗而入。放光使魔知之, T807.751c16-17. *gnyis su med pa'i zhing 'di na// byang chub snying por bzhugs nas ni// bdud 'dul rnam par ston bdzad pa// 'di ni 'jig rten mthun 'jug yin//*

[1409] 佛一念頃能使數千萬億魔不知佛處。現人爲魔所嬈。隨世間習俗而入。示現如是, T807.752b16-17. *bdud rnams bye ba dpag med pa// thugs bskyed tsam kyis 'dul mdzad kyang//bdud kyi bgegs rnams ston mdzad pa// 'di ni 'jig rten 'thun 'jug yin//*

[1410] 佛身未嘗有病。而現病呼醫服藥。與藥者得福無量。隨世間習俗而入。示現如是, T807.752a12-13. *auṣadhaṃ pratisevanti vyādhiś caiṣāṃ na vidyate/dāyakānāṃ phalaṃ bhavatu eṣā lokānuvarttanā//* MV 14. *de dag snyun ni mi mnga' yang// dge 'dun pa sdu mdzad pa'i phyir//sman kyang sten* [D: *bsten*] *par mdzad pa ni// 'di ni 'jig rten mthun 'jug yin//*

[1411] *de bzhin gshegs pa rdo rje'i sku// sangs rgyas cung zad mi snyung* [D: *bsnyun*] *yang// dge slong byang chub yan lag smos// 'di ni 'jig rten mthun 'jug yin//* I defer to Harrison's identification of the issue at stake here,

show of becoming frail in old age (Tib. v. 35, v. 99).[1412] He does not undergo the (karmic) effects of actions in former lives (Tib v. 59, 77).[1413] We might also include under this head cases where the Buddha shows himself not physically self-sufficient, that is, vulnerable to human weaknesses like hunger (Tib. v. 32, 44),[1414] hot and cold (Tib. v. 40),[1415] needing a quiet place to meditate in (Tib. v. 55),[1416] or the need for clothing (Tib. v. 41)[1417] or an umbrella (Tib v. 49).[1418]

"Some Reflections" 8 and n. 16. Harrison identifies a parallel in the Chinese, but I cannot see one, unless it be the "verses" at T807.753a13-15, which refers to the Buddha having a monk preach but otherwise does not, so far as I can tell, refer to any specific incident; Harrison's numbering system for sections in Ch. does not allow me to identify the part of the text he is thinking of here.

[1412] 佛身無有衰老時但有眾德。而現身衰老。隨世間習俗而入。示現如是, T807.752a10-11. *jarāṃ ca upadarśenti na caiṣāṃ vidyate jarā/ jinā guṇagaṇopetā eṣā lokānuvarttanā//* MV 20. *sangs rgyas yon tan kun ldan te// sku la 'gyur ba mi mnga' yang// de dag rga ba ston mdzad pa// 'di ni 'jig rten mthun 'jug yin//* 佛力無有雙比。不可復計。亦無減盡時。現人衰老求人給使。隨世間習俗而入。示現如是, T807.753b28-29. *grangs med stobs rnams rnyed gyur la// mthu las nyams pa mi mnga' yang// zham ring pa* [D *zhabs 'bring pa*] *dag tshol mdzad pa// 'di ni 'jig rten mthun 'jug yin//*

[1413] 佛前身所作善惡。不可前身得會當後身。得佛示人自作自得。隨世間習俗而入。示現如是, T807.752c02-04. *gang gis las byas 'di nyid kyis// myong bar gyur pa ma yin yang//gang gis byas pa ston mdzad pa// 'di ni 'jig rten 'thun 'jug yin//* 佛諸惡悉盡但有諸功德具足。佛現人諸惡未盡。隨世間習俗而入。示現如是, T807.753a11-12. *sdig pa thams cad yongs zad pas* [D: *de*]*// bsod nams kun kyis mngon 'phags kyang//las kyi rgyu* [D: *rgyud*] *ni ston mdzad pa// 'di ni 'jig rten mthun 'jug yin//* For a translation of (the Tib. version of) the latter verse, see Harrison, "Some Reflections" 11. On the Buddha not in fact undergoing apparent bad *karma,* see further the sections of the text discussed in Harrison, "Some Reflections" 8; and especially his erudite identification of the episodes that lie behind some very cryptic abbreviated references in the text, and his discussion of this theme in a broad range of Buddhist literature, 8-13.

[1414] 佛未嘗有飢時。用哀十方人故爲現飢。隨世間習俗而入。示現如是, T807.752a06-07. *karonti nāma āhāraṃ na caiṣāṃ bādhate kṣudhā/janatāyānukamārthaṃ eṣā lokānuvarttanā//* MV 16. *de dag bkres* [D: *sgrims*] *pa mi mgna' yang// de dag zhal zas gsol mdzad cing//sbyin pa po las* [D: *la*] *'bras bu che// 'di ni 'jig rten mthun 'jug yin//* See also Ch. to Tib. v. 44, 未嘗有飢時, for which see n. 1419.

[1415] 佛身終不以寒溫動。隨得寒溫陰涼。隨世間習俗而入。示現如是, T807.752a24-25. *rdzogs pa'i sangs rgyas thub dga'* [D: *dka'*] *la// grang dang tsha dang grib ma dang// de bzhin nyi ma ston* [D: *sten*] *mdzad pa// 'di ni 'jig rten mthun 'jug yin//*

[1416] In fact, even if all the thunder and lightning of the ten directions were combined into a single sound, it would not stir even a single hair on the Buddha's body: 合聚十方雷電之聲共作一聲。不能動佛一毛。現入禪三昧當於無聲處。隨世間習俗而入。示現如是, T807.752b24-26. *'jig rten kun gyi sgra skad kyis// de bzhin gshegs pa mi g.yo la//'on kyang sgra chung ston* [D: *sten*] *mdzad pa// 'di ni 'jig rten mthun 'jug yin//*

[1417] 佛如空現人常著衣無有解時。譬如梵天人常著衣。隨世間習俗而入。示現如是, T807.752a26-27. *cīvarāṇi ca bādheti sadā ca prāvṛtā jinā/ yathā rūpyabhāve devā eṣā lokānuvarttanā//* MV 18. *tshangs pa'i khyim na tshangs pa ltar// rgyal pa rtag par na bza' gsol//'on kyang na bza' len mdzad pa// 'di ni 'jig rten mthun 'jug yin//*

We might also include here cases where he seems to encounter misfortune, or not partake of the very best the cosmos has to offer, as when he eats poor food (Tib. v. 44);[1419] when he goes on begging rounds and seems to come back empty-handed (Tib. v. 45);[1420] when he wears rags taken from a dustheap rather than the finest clothes of the gods (Tib. v. 47);[1421] and when he makes a show of meditating on a straw mat in the open instead of dwelling in gorgeous heavenly mansions (Tib. v. 48).[1422]

Finally, we may list a few miscellaneous senses in which the docetistic theme is applied to details of the Buddhas' lives and careers. Their radiance or light is in fact limitless, but they make a show of having a halo only seven feet in radius (Tib. v. 17).[1423] The Buddhas' feet never

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1418 Already cited above n. 1407.

1419 佛咽喉有滋味之相。未嘗有飢時。用哀十方人故。有人施與麁惡悉爲受。隨世間習俗而入。示現如是, T807.752b03-05. *'jig rten rnam par 'dren pa kun// ro bro mchog rnams brnyes gyur kyang//ngan ngon dag ni sten*[1419] *mdzad pa// 'di ni 'jig rten mthun 'jug yin//* Harrison, "Some Reflections" 8, 11, and n. 13, relates this to an episode in which the Buddha had to subsist for several months on horse feed.

1420 佛功德之福不可盡。亦無有能過者。佛入城分衛得空鉢出。隨世間習俗而入。示現如是, T807.752b06-07. *kalpaploṭīṃ asaṃkhyeyaṃ puṇyeṣe pāramiṃgato/alabdhi upadarsenti eṣā lokānuvarttanā//* MV 21. *bsod nams mi zad thams cad kyis// sangs rgyas thams cad yang dag 'phags// 'on kyang ma rnyed* [D: *brnyed*] *ston mdzad pa// 'di ni 'jig rten mthun 'jug yin//*

1421 佛功德福不可盡。欲得天上天下名好衣悉可得。故著補納之衣。隨世間習俗而入。示現如是, T807.752b08-10. *bsod nams pha rol phyin pas 'phags// lha yi na bza' rnyed* [D: *brnyes*] *byur kyang//phyag dar khrod pa gsol mdzad pa// 'di ni 'jig rten mthun 'jug yin//*

1422 佛欲得舍宅床臥具天上天下珍寶殿舍悉可得。現世間人暴露精思草蓐上坐。隨世間習俗而入。示現如是, T807.752b11-13. *'og min gzhal med khang pa rnams// rnam 'dren rnams kyis yongs spangs te//rtswa khyim rnams ni sten mdzad pa// 'di ni 'jig rten 'thun 'jug 'yin//* Tib. here differs from Chinese in speaking of living "in a grass hut".

1423 佛光焰不可計照明十方。隨世間習俗而入。示現七尺光明, T807.751c04-05. *sangs rgyas 'od ni dpag med de// phyogs bcu dag tu snang mdzad kyang// 'dom gang 'od du ston mdzad pa// 'di ni 'jig rten mthun 'jug yin//* Note that this detail matches with the version of Vasumitra's Thesis 7 found in the earliest Ch. trans. (perhaps by Kumārajīva) only, for which see n. 1349.

in fact touch the ground, but they make a show of leaving footprints (Tib. v. 18).[1424] It is only in conformity with the world that a show is made of Indra pleading with the Buddha to teach, since his infinite compassion would have led him to teach all along (Tib. v. 25).[1425]

This survey of the detailed working-out of the docetistic theme in LAn should already suffice to show that the exploration and elaboration of that theme is far richer and more complex in that text than in any Mahāsāṃghika source, including of course MV, where much of the docetistic doctrine appears to be borrowed directly from LAn in any case. Even this much, however, does not fully cover the senses in which the docetistic theme is expounded in LAn; but in order to cover the remaining dimensions of that theme in the text, which are those most important to our present purposes, we must first make a brief detour into the Mahāyāna metaphysics of the text.

4.2.8 Mahāyāna "metaphysics" and *lokôttaravāda* docetism in LAn

Generally speaking, we see a number of echoes of what we might loosely call Mahāyāna "metaphysics", that is, the doctrine of *tathatā,* emptiness, etc., in LAn, especially in the latter half of the text.[1426] For example, the Buddha makes a show of saving countless persons (beings),

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1424 佛未嘗持足蹈地。文相反現地。隨世間習俗而入。示現如是, T.807.751c06-07. *mi yi dam pa nam du yang// zhabs gnyis sa la mi reg ste//'on kyang lam srang de ston pa//'di ni 'jig rten 'thun 'jug yin.* I cannot understand the first *pada* of this Tib. verse.

1425 雖得佛用哀十方人故。當爲說經度脫之。釋梵從佛求哀。爲人故使佛說經。隨世間習俗而入。示現如是, T807.751c20-22. *dpa' po thugs rje che ldan pa// bstan pa'i phyir ni 'dir gshegs la//gsol ba 'debs la gzhes mdzad pa// 'di ni 'jig rten 'thun 'jug yin//*

1426 I must note, with some trepidation, that my identification of the ideas summarised here as "Mahāyāna" seems to go directly against the evaluation of the same ideas by Paul Harrison. Harrison considers the text to have very little "Mahāyāna colouration", and while he notes that some verses "appear to relate to a standpoint typical of the Prajñāpāramitā literature", he says nonetheless that "such a standpoint is not always necessarily inconsistent with Mainstream Buddhism"; "Some Reflections" 3. I confess I simply do not understand what definition of "Mainstream Buddhism" he could have in mind here, or what sorts of source texts he would find it in, and that I also do not understand what he means when he says that the doctrines of the present text are "not . . . inconsistent" with it.

even though he knows that they fundamentally do not exist.[1427] Because all is empty, there is in fact no bondage or liberation, but the Buddhas make a show of people being liberated (or "show [other] people [that they are] liberated") (Tib. v. 70).[1428] There is in fact no *nirvāṇa* for the Buddha or the Arhat to go to, but nonetheless a show is made of *nirvāṇa* (Tib. v. 711).[1429] The difference between *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa* themselves are but a docetistic show on the part of Buddhas, *pratyekabuddhas* and Arhats (Tib. v. 80).[1430]

As these examples already show clearly, the Mahāyāna metaphysics of the text is closely related to its docetistic theme, and in fact, we could accurately say that the docetism of the text extends well beyond the Buddha's person to phenomenal reality as a whole.[1431] This "metaphysical docetistic" theme is in fact very far-reaching in the text: it is only an illusory appearance that things are mutable, multifarious, imperfect and so on, and this illusory state of affairs is contrasted to the true, immutable, perfect and homogeneous reality known by the

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This definitional problem, it seems, also runs through much of my disagreement with Harrison in Chapter 4.1 of this dissertation, where I treat the early Prajñāpāramitā.

[1427] 佛知世間本無人。諸所有本無形。佛現度脫無央數人。隨世間習俗而入。示現如是, T807.752c05-06. Nothing seems obviously to correspond directly to this verse at this place in the sequence of Tib.

[1428] 空空亦無繫。亦無脫世間。佛示人度脫。隨世間習俗而入。示現如是, T807.752c28-29. Tib. is similar in effect but differs in significant details: *'dus byas rnams kyi ngo bo nyid// ngo bo nyid kyis grol bcings me// 'on kyang rnam par grol ba ston// 'di ni 'jig rten 'thun 'jug yin//*

[1429] 佛般泥洹無所向。阿羅漢般泥洹無所向。佛說法示人。隨世間習俗而入。示現如是, T807.753a01-02. *mya ngan 'das la 'gro med kyang// dgra bcom de ni 'gro 'ong zhes// sems can rnams la de bstan pa// 'di ni 'jig rten mthun 'jug yin//* Note that Ch. at least seems to show a notion of two different kinds of *nirvāṇa* appertaining to Buddhas and Arhats respectively.

[1430] 佛辟支佛阿羅漢未得道人。現死生得泥洹。隨世間習俗而入。示現如是, T807.753a21-22. *sangs rgyas rang sangs rgyas rnams dang// nyan thos so so'i skye bo dang//'khor ba dang ni mya ngan 'das// tshig gi las kyis rab tu bye* [D: *phye*] //

[1431] This aspect of the text is rich with potential for comparative study, and bears immediately on the connections between docetism and what we might call gnosticism in the Buddhist context also, itself a further comparative problematic. For example, "The Docetæ described by Hippolytus (*Philos*., VIII, i-iv, X, xii) are likewise a Gnostic sect; these perhaps extended their illusion theory to all material substances;" *Catholic Encyclopedia* s.v. "Docetæ".

Buddhas in their enlightened state. This dimension of the text's broader "docetism" is particularly clear in the contrast it dwells upon at length between "[all] *dharmas*" and the "realm of *dharma*[-ness]" (*dharmadhātu*).

Thus, to cite some representative claims, the Buddhas know that all *dharmas* are fundamentally empty and inexistent, but they make a show of the cycle of *saṃsāra* (Tib. v. 60).[1432] In a sense that is slightly obscure, the *dharmadhātu* is in fact the same as the *sattvadhātu* (Tib. v. 94).[1433] The Buddhas know that in fact *dharmas* have "no form" (no essence?),[1434] but they nonetheless make a show of there being plural *dharmas.*[1435] Similarly, *dharmas* endure although (?而住) they are originally unarisen (本無所從生, *anutpāda*), and yet the Buddhas make a show of [there being] *dharmas* (Tib. v. 95).[1436] The *dharmadhātu* is unsurpassable, because past, present and

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[1432] 佛知諸經法本空本亦無所有。現人有更死生。隨世間習俗而入。示現如是, T807.752c07-08. *chos rnams thams cad stong pa la// skyes bu mchog rnams mngon sum yang// 'chi 'pho skye ba ston mdzad pa// 'di ni 'jig rten mthun 'jug yin//* Cf. also Tib. v. 61, T807.752c08-10; v. 62, 752c13-14.

[1433] 本無所生無所滅經本界悉入。佛現人境界壞敗時。隨世間習俗而入。示現如是, T807.753b18-19. *ṇa viṇaṣṭa (or: viṇaṭṭha?) na uppaṇṇa (?) dharmmadhāusamaṃ jagaṃ/sattadhāuṃ ca daṃśesi eṣā loānuvattaṇā//* Skt. taken from Candrakīrti's comm. on MMK, *Prasannapadā,* affirmed by Tib equivalent in Candrakīrti's *Madhyāmakāvatāra, zhig pa med cing skye med la// chos byings dang mnyam par gyur kyang//sreg pa'i skal pa brjod mdzad pa// 'di ni 'jig rten mthun 'jug yin//* Harrison 225. Tib. LAn: *zhig pa med cing skye med la// chos kyi dbyings dang mnyam gyur kyang// bsreg* [D: *sreg*] *pa'i bskal pa ston mdzad pa// 'di ni 'jig rten mthun 'jug yin//*

[1434] Note that at 752c05-06 "have no form" 無有形 is matched with 無人 "there is no person", and in the next verse is followed by apparent talk of thusness, *śūnyatā* etc. 諸經法本空本亦無所有, T807.752c07. In LAn Ch. to Tib. v. 95, it seems that *wuxing* 無形 corresponds to *ngo bo nyid med* = **niḥsvabhāvatā?* (or perhaps **svarūpa*?) for which see n. 1436. Whatever exact term it translates, therefore, it clearly has to do with a Mahāyāna notion of emptiness, perhaps specifically *dharmanairātmya* as opposed to *pudgalanairātyma.*

[1435] 佛悉知諸經法本無形。佛現人說經法甚眾多。隨世間習俗而入。示現如是, T807.753a07-08. Tib. here (v. 74) corresponds only loosely, and speaks rather of the Buddhas knowing that all *dharmas* are ineffable, but nonetheless speaking of them: *chos rnams thams cad brjod med par// de bzhin gshegs pas rab mkhyen kyang//brjod pa dag ni ston mdzad pa// 'di ni 'jig rten mthun 'jug yin//*

[1436] 經法本無所從生無形而住。佛現經法。隨世間習俗而入。示現如是, T807.753b20-21. Correspondence with Tib. seems imperfect: *chos kyi dbyings ni grub med de// de la ngo bo nyid med kyang//'on kyang ngas par 'byung ston pa// 'di ni 'jig rten mthun 'jug yin//* Note that *wuxing* 無形 here corresponds to Tib. *ngo bo nyid med* = **niḥsvabhāvatā*? Further on *wuxing,* see n. 1636 , 1434 etc.

future times are all empty (*śūnya*); nonetheless, the Buddha, in conformity with the world, makes a show of some particular *dharmas* being noble and exalted (Tb. 93).[1437]

In some places, further, the connections between Mahāyāna metaphysics and this broader metaphysical or ontological docetism are worked out in specific application to the person of the Buddha, which begins to make very clear the close connections between the Mahāyāna metaphysics of the text and its docetistic Buddhalogy. Thus, the Buddhas *neither come nor go* (my emphasis; cf. the Prajñāpāramitā doctrines of e.g. Skt. *Aṣṭa* Ch. 16, Mokṣala's *Pañca* Ch. 89), but in conformity with the world they make a show of doing so (presumably referring to their appearance in the world, *parinirvāṇa*) (Tib. v. 27).[1438] Similarly, the Buddhas, like space, *do not pass away or abide*, but in conformity with the world, they are said to abide (Tib. v. 28).[1439] At least if we follow the most intuitive interpretation of Lokakṣema's Chinese, the text also seems to say that the very "existence" or "being" (*you* 有) of the Buddhas is a mere docetistic show in conformity with the world.[1440]

[1437] 經法本[var. 本法]界無有能過者。過去當來今現在皆空故。佛現人尊經法。隨世間習俗而入。示現如是, T807.753b15-17. *chos kyi dbyings la mchog med de// dus gsum dag tu stong nyid kyang//mchog gi* [D: *gis*] *chos rnams ston mdzad pa// 'di ni 'jig rten mthun 'jug yin//*

[1438] 佛亦無所從來。去亦無所至。住如本無。隨世間習俗而入。呼佛爲出入。示現如是, T807.751c25-26. *rdzogs pa'i sangs rgyas rnams la ni// byon dang bzhugs* [D: *bzhud*] *pa mi mnga' yang// 'on kyang bzhud pa* [D: *par*] *rnam snang ba// 'di ni 'jig rten mthun 'jug yin//* For the Prajñāpāramitā analogues noted here, see §4.3.7, p. 754 (*Aṣṭa*); §4.3.11, esp. 784, 786 (*Pañca*).

[1439]The exact sense of this verse is slightly obscure, but it seems clear that this is its general thrust: 佛無入所適住。譬如空亦無所適住。隨世間習俗而入。呼佛爲住。示現如是, T807.751c27-28. Tib. is slightly more specific here, saying that the Buddhas "do not abide in all *dharmas*"; it further connects this, in a manner not specifically stated, with the idea that he is never defiled and never undergoes purification: *rgyal pa rnams ni mkha' 'dra ste// chos rnams kun la mi gnas kyang// ldad pa star yang snang ba ni// 'di ni 'jig rten 'thun 'jug yin//*

[1440] 佛本無所有。隨世間所喜樂現所有。隨世間習俗而入。示現如是, T807.752a20-21. The interpretation of this verse is beset with numerous difficulties, even if we bracket the usual well-known difficulties of talking about ontology in a Buddhist context. First, of course, the status and interpretation of the concept of *you* 有 in Chinese philosophy itself is a contested issue, and to translate it as "being" or "existence" may be only approximately helpful. Second, however, *benwu* 本無 "fundamental

Thus, the docetism of the text with regard to the Buddha's person and acts is clearly part and parcel of a wider "docetism" or gnosticism that holds that all of phenomenal reality is an unreal show, and that truth or reality is in fact radically different from these appearances. Especially given that LAn is both the earliest and the richest context in which we see the docetistic doctrine of the Buddha's person and acts elaborated, this context is extremely important, but it has been entirely overlooked by scholarship to date, presumably because scholars have been complacent in the idea that the origin of docetistic Buddhalogy was already known and lay in the (possibly phantom) early Mahāsāṃghika constructed by later doxography. As we shall now see, however, the connections between the wider Mahāyāna-metaphysical docetism of the text and its docetistic Buddhalogy do not stop at general assertions about the Buddha's person and acts, but rather, reach to a number of rich specifics about the Buddha's embodiments and their relative status and worth. In these respects, if the attribution of the text to Lokakṣema and its date is accurate, the text moreover represents a number of significant "firsts" in the history of body doctrine, and seems therefore to comprise a landmark out of all proportion to its brief scope.

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inexistence" seems to be Lokakṣema's translation for whatever prototypical version of the concept of "Thusness" (see e.g. n. 1685). A proper examination of this issue would quickly embroil us in the obscure difficulties of determining what might have been meant by *wu* in indigenous Chinese thought, probably especially "Daoism", at a time a good half-century before Wang Bi. Further, however, it seems to be the case that even the Tibetan version of the text has preserved for us no close equivalent of Lokakṣema's text here. The text that corresponds in sequence, Tib. v. 38, speaks rather in terms of the Buddhas having no constructive imagination (*vikalpa*), but nonetheless making a show of being?/having? a cognitive object (*viṣaya*) in accordance with the objects apprehended by sentient beings: *sangs rgyas rnam rtog mi mnga' yang// sems can spyod yul ji bzhin du//de dag spyod pa rnam par rtog// 'di ni 'jig rten mthun 'jug yin//* While we can imagine a sense in which it might be equivalent to "manifesting themselves like an [ordinary phenomenal] existent" (in Lokakṣema's terms) for the Buddhas to "manifest themselves as an ordinary cognitive object of apprehension", at the very least, this way of putting things would seem to indicate a fundamental shift of vocabulary from a kind of anti-ontology characteristic of formative Prajñāpāramitā to the epistemological focus of Vijñānavāda.

4.2.9 The docetistic theme in relation to the doctrine of the Buddha's embodiment in LAn

We now turn, therefore, to the specific ideas about the Buddha's embodiments found in LAn, and their relationship to its broader docetism. We can group these ideas in two categories: (1) that the Buddha is to be identified with, or is embodied in *dharma* or the *dharmadhātu*; (2) that other apparent embodiments of the Buddha, or features of them, are a mere docetistic show. Since we have just treated the Mahāyāna metaphysical dimensions of the text, and its understanding of *dharmadhātu* as the reality underlying illusory phenomena, and since this doctrine relates closely to the texts claims that the Buddha is to be identified with *dharma* or *dharmadhātu,* I will treat that aspect of the text's doctrine of embodiments first.

LAn is, to my knowledge, the single text that comes closest to announcing the concept of *dharmakāya* in so many words this early in the Chinese record.[1441] This is the first respect in which LAn, if it is indeed by Lokakṣema, represents a "first" in the history of embodiment doctrines. For example, in one very striking verse, LAn asserts that the Buddha actually "calls *dharmas* his body" (以經法名爲身), and that his [apparent] body is "like a mirage" (佛身如幻). In contrast to this state of affairs, it is merely in conformity with the world that he shows himself to have a "base" body (現人惡露身) (Tib. v. 37).[1442] Nor is this the only passage in which the text comes extraordinarily close to articulating the doctrine of *dharmakāya* in so

[1441] See §4.5.2 for a survey of other early instances in the Chinese record, where I conclude that the earliest instance other than this is found in Zhi Qian's *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa*. For some reason, though Paul Harrison analyses LAn as having all the raw materials for later *trikāya* theory in his "Some Reflections", he seems to downplay the extent to which the materials I assemble here seem clearly to show the elements of a prototypical *dharmakāya* theory.

[1442] 佛身如幻以經法名爲身。現人惡露身。隨世間習俗而入。示現如是, T807.752a18-19. Tib. speaks of *yid kyi sku,* i.e. **mano[maya]kāya*? where Ch. speaks of a "body like a phantom"; and it calls the "base body" a "body full of pus" *rnag can sku*, which suggests (in spirit if not letter) the "*pūtikāya*" of *Vakkali-sutta,* for which see above p. 363: *yid kyi sku dang ldan pas na* [D: *la*]*// de bzhin gshegs pa chos sku yang// rnag can sku ni ston mdzad pa// 'di ni 'jig rten mthun 'jug yin//* Indeed, it seems that Paul Harrison identifies this body as *pūtikāya;* at least, though he gives no citation, I can think of no other passage in the text he could mean when he says that term is used in LAn, "Some Reflections" 15. We will return to the implications of this verse for the Buddha's worldly body below.

many words. Elsewhere, we read, "The Buddhas all share one body; they take [all] *dharmas* for their body" (Tib. v. 79).[1443] It is very noteworthy that the Tibetan here (*de bzhin gshegs pa chos sku* [*ste*]) is most likely a direct translation of the standard assertion that the Buddhas or Tathāgatas are embodied in *dharma* attested in Sanskrit in other texts: **dharmakāyās tathāgatāḥ*. Further, given the fact that we know Lokakṣema translated (*sarva*)*dharma*(*s*) as *jingfa* 經法 even in contexts where the text was demonstrably not speaking of *dharma* in the sense of "teaching",[1444] there is no obvious reason why Lokakṣema's Chinese 佛 . . . 以經法爲身 would not reflect the same underlying Indic: **dharmakāyās tathāgatāḥ*.

Moreover, the sense in which the text is proposing that the Buddha is equivalent to the *dharma* is extremely clear. We have already seen immediately above that certain aspects of the docetistic show made by the Buddhas are contrasted with a true state of affairs in which they are described in terms clearly resonant of the Mahāyāna "absolute":[1445] they do not come or go, they do not [simply] "exist" in the sense that phenomena seem to exist, and so on. Elsewhere, the text in fact explains the contrast between the docetistic show made by the Buddha and the true state of affairs precisely *in terms of* the identification of the Buddha with the *dharmadhātu*.

[1443] The Chinese text goes on to say, "and yet they make a show of teaching the Dharma for others", though I cannot understand the ostensible connection between these propositions: 諸佛合一身以經法爲身。佛現爲人說經法。隨世間習俗而入。示現如是, T807.753a19-20. The logic of Tib. is easier to understand: "Nonetheless, they manifest themselves as several", *de bzhin gshegs pa chos sku ste// gcig ci 'dra bar de bzhin kun// 'on kyang tha dad ston mdzad pa// 'di ni 'jig rten mthun 'jug yin//* Harrison translates Tib. here: "Since the Realised Ones (*tathāgatas*) are embodied in the dharma,/ As one is, so are they all;/ Nevertheless, they make a show of multiplicity;/ This is conformity with the world;" "Some Reflections" 16.

[1444] See §4.3.10.

[1445] On the use of this term in application to Mahāyāna metaphysics in this dissertation, see n. 1743.

Thus, in one verse (Tib. v. 85), the text states: "Should anyone wish to know [about] the Buddha and understand the *dharma*(*s*) of the Buddha, then they should understand (入)[1446] thoroughly (悉) the 'realm of the limit of the root of *dharmas*' (經本端界, corresponding to Tib. *chos dbyings* = **dharmadhātu*); such a person will understand the Buddha."[1447]

In another passage, one of the most remarkable in the text as a whole, LAn actually uses the identification of the Buddha and the *dharmadhātu* to justify the doctrine that the *bodhisattva* does not really enter into his mother's womb and does not really issue therefrom, which is a clear variation on an idea we have seen is one of the most widespread *lokôttaravāda* notions. The text says, "The *bodhisattva* dos not enter his mother's womb, and he does not come out of his mother's womb, for the reason that there is nowhere the *dharmadhātu* does not already interfuse (經法本界無所不入). It is in conformity with the world that the *bodhisattva* makes a show of entering his mother's womb."[1448]

Thus, it seems indisputable that in the Chinese LAn: (1) reality is understood in the precise terms of the Mahāyāna "absolute", specifically in terms of the *dharmadhātu,* which is unchanging, singular, "non-existent" ("thus") etc.; (2) the Buddha is understood to be embodied in this reality, such that the Buddhas in fact all share the same "body", do not come

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[1446] Probably for something like e.g. Skt. *pra/viś.*

[1447] 中有欲知佛及了佛法者。經本端界悉入。是人爲曉了佛。隨世間習俗而入。示現如是, T807.753a28-29. *sangs rgyas chos nyid gang yin dang// sangs rgyas rig pa su 'dod pa//de ni chos dbyings zhus shig pa// 'di ni 'jig rten mthun 'jug yin//* Incidentally, the refrain that something-or-other is "[merely] in conformity with the world" seems to be a mere tokenistic formula in this case, and makes no obvious sense.

[1448] 菩薩亦不入母腹中。亦不從母腹中出。何以故。經法本界無所不入。菩薩現人入母腹中。隨世間習俗而入。示現如是, T807.753b01-03. This verse seems to correspond to nothing in Tib.

or go, etc.;[1449] (3) this understanding is actually articulated in a form as close as we could want, at this period in doctrinal history, to the outright declaration of *dharmakāya* in so many words; (4) this understanding of the Buddha's true embodiment is used to explain, and may well motivate, an extremely rich exploration of the docetistic theme.

This much already makes LAn a truly remarkable text among our sources for the history of embodiment doctrine. In addition, however, we also see further that this understanding of the Buddha as most veritably and actually embodied in the *dharmadhātu* is explicitly related to other doctrines about his apparently worldly embodiments. Here, the docetistic theme is applied to the question of the Buddha's body in terms that very closely anticipate the notion of *nairmāṇikakāya*.[1450]

Thus, in another remarkable verse, LAn says (approximately) that "the Buddhas fundamentally do not exist [i.e. that they are identical with *tathatā*?], but they manifest bodies (現身) in such forms (*se* 色, *rūpa*) as accord with the liking of the world, [even though they are in fact] fundamentally one" (Tib. v. 54).[1451] In a certainly related doctrine, the text says, "The Buddhas,

[1449] In light of these dimensions of the doctrine of the (proto-)*dharmakāya* in this text, I cannot understand how Paul Harrison can maintain (in "Real Phantom Body") that the *dharmakāya* is understood in terms of a "Mainstream" model of plural *dharmas* until much later in doctrinal history; see Chapter 4.1 of this dissertation, infra. Indeed, he maintains his insistence upon the theses of that article even in the context of a specific treatment of LAn, "Some Reflections" 14: "It [the term *dharmakāya*] does not denote some kind of absolute or cosmic reality, underlying all other manifestations of Buddhahood, as is commonly understood;" rather it means either "that he is truly embodied in the *dharma* (the teaching or the truth), or . . . the body or collection of the scriptures, teachings, truths or qualities mastered or possessed by a Buddha."

[1450] Paul Harrison has already noted the anticipations of the *nairmāṇikakāya* in LAn: see "Some Reflections" 14-15, 15-16.

[1451] The translation here is approximate because I cannot make complete sense of the Chinese syntax, and I suspect either a relatively literal equivalence to an underlying Indic (Sanskrit or Prakrit) locution, or else a slight corruption in the text. 佛無本隨世間所喜色。現身如是本一。隨世間習俗而入。示現如是, T807.752b22-23. The Tib. here seems to give us some indication of what the Chinese should be trying to convey: "These various bodies do not exist, and yet, in conformity with the faith (*adhimukti*) of

by their magical power (化), split their bodies, so that they are omnipresent in innumerable *buddhakṣetra*; [and yet in fact] the body of the Buddha does not increase or decrease (佛身亦不增亦不減, cf. *anūnatvâpūrṇatva*!). It is in conformity with the world that they make such a show" (Tib. v. 89).[1452] In another striking verse, already examined above, LAn asserts that the Buddha's [apparent] body is "like a mirage" (佛身如幻), and that it is merely in conformity with the world that he shows himself to have a "base" body (現人惡露身); this is, as we saw previously, contrasted with the statement that he in truth "calls *dharmas* his body" (以經法名爲身).[1453] We also examined above another verse in which it was averred that Buddhas are not born of sexual intercourse of their parents, but their bodies are made *by magical transformation*

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sentient beings, [the Buddhas] manifest (*sprul pa mdzad pa*, *nir/mā*) bodies; this is in conformity with the world," *de dag sna tshogs sku med kyang// sems can mos pa ji bzhin du//sku lus sprul pa mdzad pa ni// 'di ni 'jig rten mthun 'jug yin//* Harrison translates (from Tib., as I believe is the case throughout his paper), "Even though they are without various bodies/ In accordance with the inclination of beings/ They produce phantom bodies:/ This is conformity with the way of the world;" "Some Reflections" 15-16.

[1452] 佛化分身在無央數。不可復計佛刹悉遍至。佛身亦不增亦不減。隨世間習俗而入。示現如是, T807.753b08-10. *da dag tha dad sku med kyang// sangs rgyas zhing rnams dpag med du// sku lus dag ni sprul mdzad pa//'di ni 'jig rten mthun 'jug yin//* Note the loose correspondence of the first *pada* of Tib. with Tib. v. 54, just cited in n. 1451. Harrison translates Tib. here, "Even though they lack various bodies,/ They conjure up [Skt. *nir-mā*?] bodies/ In countless Buddha-fields:/ This is conformity with way of the world;" "Some Reflections" 16. Harrison also cites in this connection Tib. v. 88, "Even though for the non-produced/ There is neither one nor many,/ They make a show of a varied succession:/ This is conformity with the way of the world;" *mi skye ba la gcig pa 'am// mang po yong pa ma yin yang//sna tshogs rim pa ston mdzad pa//'di ni 'jig rten mthun 'jug yin//* Harrison seems to see some equivalent to this Tib. verse in Ch. (he cites §§83-84 in his numbering for Tib. v. 88-89), and although he does not provide Taishō equivalents for his numbering system, he should logically refer to 菩薩母腹空定。含受一佛境界。菩薩各各現人因緣生。隨世間習俗而入。示現如是, T807.753b06-07; however, while this shares with Tib. the basic conceit that the individual circumstances of each *bodhisattva's* incarnation are merely a docetistic display (as Harrison suggests when he summarises this verse by saying that "plurality over time . . . is ultimately fictitious"), the mode in which this idea is expressed is very different: "The *bodhisattvas* [enter into] the *samādhi* of emptiness in their mothers' wombs, and thus partake of (?含受) the one realm of Buddhahood (一佛境界); [that] they nonetheless each manifest birth according to causes and conditions is a [mere] show in conformity with the world." Once more, it seems to me, the logic by which this verse *explains* the difference between the docetistic appearance and the true reality of buddhahood refers precisely to a kind of underlying oneness, in virtue of a relation to or identification with a metaphysical "ultimate", which Harrison seems in places concerned to deny, e.g. "Some Reflections" 14; see n. 1449. Harrison himself even cites immediately after these verses Tib. v. 111, which seems to have no Ch. equivalent, which once more asserts that the Saṃyaksaṃbuddhas are one: *rdzogs pa'i sangs rgyas gcig yin yang . . .* "Some Reflections" 16-17.

[1453] See n. 1442.

(or "spontaneous generation", 化作),[1454] and they make a display of having parents *in the manner of a mirage* (譬如幻示現父母) (Tib. v. 15).[1455]

Thus, another respect in which the LAn is a groundbreaking text for its time is that it explicitly articulates the docetistic conceit *with respect to the Buddha's last earthly body*; in other words, it expresses *nairmāṇikakāya* doctrine in all but name. Moreover, this is in fact a move that is made *nowhere* in our extant Mahāsāṃghika sources and doxographical characterisations, however natural the connection between docetism and *nairmāṇikakāya* doctrine may have appeared to prior secondary scholars. LAn also makes this move in specific opposition to the statement that the Buddha's most veritable embodiment is in *dharmas* or the *dharmadhātu,* that is, in opposition to a set of ideas clearly recognisable as Mahāyāna *dharmakāya* doctrine; and finally, the Mahāyāna metaphysics upon which this notion draws is articulated at length in other parts of the text, is itself in turn clearly related to other aspects of the docetistic doctrine of the text and ways it bears on the Buddha's embodiment, and indeed, underwrites what I have more broadly called a "metaphysical docetism" of which the docetism with regard to the person and career of the Buddha is merely a prominent and consistent part.

As we have already seen, LAn is significantly earlier than anything else we have attesting to *lokôttaravāda* ideas. I have also argued that the identification of LAn itself as a "Lokôttaravāda" text, in the sense that we might ascribe it to the Lokôttaravāda *school,* is entirely circular, since

[1454] If we had only this verse on the text's doctrine of production of bodies by *hua,* we would not be sure that the text does not simply refer to the *aupapāduka* birth proper to beings in higher heavens, etc.; we have already seen above that MV holds that the *bodhisattva's* genesis is *aupapāduka* (*svaguṇanirvṛttā upapādukā*), for which see n. 1328. However, in light of Tib. v. 89 just cited, which has *sprul mdzad pa* for Ch. 佛化分身 (see n. 1452), we can be sure that the text does know a doctrine of bodies produced by magical transformation, whatever is precisely intended here.

[1455] See n. 1389.

it is only on the basis of a Lokôttaravāda identification of the text that we might presume Mahāsāṃghika or any subschool subscribed to *lokôttaravāda* ideas in the period concerned. We now see, moreover, that (1) the articulation of the docetistic theme in this text goes considerably beyond even the sum total of everything found in later texts combined, both in the detail and in the thoroughness of its application to the Buddha's person, his career, and the special gnosis that makes him *buddha*; (2) that this articulation takes place in a context in which we also see at play a Mahāyāna metaphysics *never* witnessed in any of our other sources for (even putative) Mahāsāṃghika/Lokôttaravāda ideas; (3) that this Mahāyāna metaphysics is explicitly, coherently and intimately related to the docetistic or *lokôttaravāda* ideas in the text; (4) that the metaphysically grounded docetism of the text is explicitly related to ideas about embodiment in ways, and at a level of detail, which is also never seen in other Mahāsāṃghika sources. I contend that these various facts, in combination, mean that we should regard LAn as the *de facto* source of these ideas among the texts still extant, and that we should drop any spurious identification of the text with the Mahāsāṃghika school, for which identification there is no independent evidence.

Thus, the most plausible interpretation of our evidential record is that *lokôttaravāda*/docetistic Buddhalogy, and the ideas of embodiment that attend it, do *not* have their origin in Mainstream schools doctrine of any kind, nor in pietistic imaginings welling up from popular Buddhist contexts in the vague context of a *jātaka*-style apotheosis of the Buddha, etc., but rather, that they originate as the considered cognate of the new Mahāyāna "metaphysic" of the "absolute", and an embodiment doctrine that holds that the Buddha's most veritable embodiment is precisely in that absolute. And indeed, if this is the case, it is logical enough. As soon as somebody claims, "The real body of the Buddha is the *dharmadhātu*" etc., it is an immediately apparent step to ask, "Well, then, what was that embodiment in which he walked and talked in

the Gangetic Plain, as set forth in the scriptures?" Once this question is asked, in turn, docetism is certainly one readily available logical option, especially if (as has already been seen in ideas of the *manomayakāya*) we are conceiving of a being who should indeed have the power to elaborate additional bodies at will.

Further, Paul Harrison has pointed out that LAn contains much that "correspond[s] with the splendid vision later known as the *saṃbhogakāya*". This aspect of the text might otherwise have escaped my notice, and I can do no better than to cite Harrison himself. He notes:

> " . . . a kind of body is posited which is not like the ordinary human body, with which indeed it is contrasted, but appears to have physical characteristics (i.e., it is perceptible to the senses). This body has a golden colour, is immaculate, has similarly immaculate lotus-like feet which never touch the ground, has spotless pearl-like teeth, is incredibly strong (being able to move countless world-systems with its big toe), is always clothed like a god, has a crown of the head which cannot be looked down upon, and is impervious to sickness . . . . However, at least one well-known aspect of this [body] is also denied: that the Buddhas have a nimbus one *vyāma* in extent is also a show, since their radiance is immeasurable and lights up the whole cosmos."[1456]

However, the sense in which "this" body is posited as a separate "kind of" Buddha body by the text is arguably weakest, of all the three bodies of the later *trikāya* schema. As we have seen above, the prototypical *dharmakāya* is very nearly spoken of in so many words (in Ch.), and the prototypical docetistic body that anticipates the *nairmāṇikakāya* is at least spoken of in terms of *nir/mā,* and an account is thus given of its specific nature, this body is not singled out as a specific category at all, nor is its production or status accounted for in any way. It is rather simply spoken of, where named at all, as "the body", and in many instances the various features Harrison lists can be discussed without reference to the body, as a general category, at all.

[1456] Harrison, "Some Reflections" 15. Note that *none* of only three instances of words for "body" in MV corresponding to LAn is *kāya*: we have *śarīra* (rather arbitrarily it seems, perhaps *metri causa;* v. 3, Harrison, "Sanskrit Fragments" 215); *deha* (v. 12, p. 215) and *samuchraya* (v. 22, 216). We also have *bimba* in v. 10, which Harrison translates "form" (215, 217), corresponding to 佛身 (752a2; see Harrison 220). Some of the parallels identified by Harrison moreover show that where the Chinese has "body", there is no corresponding word in Sanskrit at all (to v. 14, p. 220; v. 20, 222). Note, however, that the parallel in Nāgārjuna's *Niraupamyastava* has *kāya* (in the locative, *kāye*); if this hymn is indeed by Nāgārjuna, it could be quite significant.

We should also note that "this" body, which is not yet singled out as a separate body, really comprises a collection of features some of which, in and of themselves, are not as remarkable at this date as either the prototypical *dharmakāya* or the prototypical *nairmāṇikakāya*. Thus, the golden colour of the body and the pearly teeth, as we have already seen, are among the marks of the *mahāpuruṣa,* and we saw above (Chapter 3.1) that these ideas were already present it the Pāli-canonical period. At this stage of my research I cannot say whether others of the remarkable features attributed to the Buddha here, such as strength, imperviousness to sickness, being constantly clothed, or having a crown of the head that cannot be looked down upon, are new and remarkable ideas at this period in Buddhist history or not; I suspect that they are, but confirmation of this suspicion will require further careful research.

As Harrison's comments also imply, this prototypical *sāṃbhogikakāya* it also treated in an ambiguous manner by the text. Most aspects of the Buddha's embodiment which were later to be part of the *sāṃbhogikakāya* are treated as if they are in fact features of his veritable embodiment, and thus fall on the same side of the docetistic divide between reality and appearance as the prototypical *dharmakāya* of the text. At the same time, other aspects of the Buddha's embodiment are treated as part of the docetistic show, and thus fall with the prototypical *nairmāṇikakāya* on the side of illusion. Thus, as Harrison aptly observes, the embodiment doctrines of the text do not form a coherence system: it is not the case that "we can detect in the LAn (or any other Lokakṣema text for that matter) a formalised theory of different bodies of the Buddha".[1457]

[1457] "Some Reflections" 14.

This brings us close to the end of our summary of the contents of LAn, but we finally note two other respects in which its doctrine of embodiments is equally revolutionary for its time.

First, as we have already seen above, the Buddha is attributed in this text with a body that is "like adamant" (佛身如金剛; Tib. v. 33).[1458] We will see further below[1459] that the concept of the Buddha having a body "like" adamant (*jin'gang, vajra*) eventually parlayed into statements that his body *was* adamant (*vajrakāya*);[1460] and that this development was closely associated with the emergence of a parallel conception of the Buddha as literally immortal. As we shall also see there, the instance of this concept in LAn is one of the earliest instances to be found in the Chinese record, and therefore represents another minor respect in which the text is characterised by ideas more typical of a period slightly later.

Indeed, the other respect in which LAn is remarkable for its date is in the fact that we also seem to find in it an early form of the related doctrine that the Buddha is in fact immortal; it states clearly that the *bodhisattva* lives forever without end, because he [in fact] dwells in *tathatā*.[1461]

[1458] See n. 1391. Note that it is said again in Tib. that he has an adamantine body (v. 76), but in a context which seems to me to have no direct Ch. equivalent: *de bzhin gshegs pa rdo rje'i sku// sangs rgyas cung zad mi snyung* [D: *bsnyun*] *yang// dge slong byang chub yan lag smos// 'di ni 'jig rten mthun 'jug yin//* Harrison correlates this Tib. verse with what he calls "§74" of the Chinese text.

[1459] See §5.1.4, and esp. n. 2356.

[1460] Harrison states that the Buddha's body, which he treats in this respect under the head of materials in LAn that bespeak a prototypical *sāṃbhogikakāya,* is identified by the term *vajrakāya*; "Some Reflections" 15. Harrison refers to Tib. v. 76, which he correlates to some part of the Ch., but I was unable to find any equivalent in Ch. to the statement that the Buddha's body is adamant; see again n. 1458. Tib. v. 33, to which Harrison does not refer in this regard, clearly says "like adamant", *rdo rje 'dra ba,* as does Ch.

[1461] "The *bodhisattva* always manifests himself as being reborn without end, and yet [in fact] he eternally dwells in thusness, and does not undergo any suffering; it is in conformity with the world that he makes such a show; 菩薩常現生無有絕時。常本無而住不勤苦。隨世間習俗而入。示現如是, T807.753b11-12. Nothing seems to correspond to this in Tib., so far as I can see.

In this respect, too, the doctrine of the text is almost ahead of its time, as we will see in more detail in the related parts of Chapter 5.1.

4.2.10 Possible implications for the dating of the text and its attribution to Lokakṣema

This means that, in sum, LAn contains the earliest or one of the earliest instances of the following set of doctrines:

(1) The detailed working-out of the docetistic theme.

(2) The notion of embodiment in *dharma* (even though we cannot be entirely sure what we see in the text reflects the term *dharmakāya* in the underlying Indic text).

(3) The prototypical notion of the *nairmāṇikakāya,* though not so-named.

(4) That the Buddha's body is like adamant.

(5) That the Buddha is in fact immortal, in a sense closely linked to the identification of the Buddha with the Mahāyāna "absolute".

Any one of these features would be enough to make LAn a remarkable text. In combination, they seem to make it truly extraordinary. On the whole, the text seems so unusual for Lokakṣema's period that I find myself wondering whether the attribution to Lokakṣema is in fact justified, and these doubts confront me with serious methodological difficulties. I will describe those difficulties shortly, but first, I will examine one piece of evidence that *lokôttaravāda* ideas were known to Nāgārjuna.

4.2.11 *Lokôttaravada* ideas in the *Niraupamyastava* attributed to Nāgārjuna

As Paul Harrison has pointed out, the *Niraupamyastava,* attributed to Nāgārjuna as the second of his *Catuḥstava,* contains echoes of *lokôttaravāda* ideas, including some ideas attributed to the

Mahāsāṃghikas. If this text is in fact by Nāgārjuna, it represents important independent corroborative evidence that *lokôttaravāda* ideas were current in the period at issue here, and we might further observe that, once more, there is little to associate the context in which we find those ideas with Mahāsāṃghika or the Mainstream, but rather, that we find them, again, in a clearly Mahāyāna context, as is the case in LAn itself. However, we will also see that, as with the body doctrine of *Ratnâvalī* cited in Chapter 4.5 below, the body doctrine of this text gives us reasons to wonder whether the text in fact can be by Nāgārjuna at all; certainly, if it is indeed by Nāgārjuna, it would lead us to suspect alternatively that it is astonishingly ahead of its time, and, especially in combination with *Ratnâvalī,* that Nāgārjuna is perhaps a hitherto unheralded major contributor to the development of key body doctrines in the Mahāyāna.

One *lokôttaravāda* idea contained in the text it is not, to my knowledge, found in any Mahāsāṃghika text, or in LAn. This is the claim that "Not a single syllable has been uttered by you, O Lord, but any man who has to be converted, has been gladdened by the rain of your Doctrine (v. 7)."[1462] There are obvious connections between this idea and Vasumitra's Thesis 12. This precise idea is paralleled only in the unusual portrait of Mahāsāṃghika ideas found in the doxographies,[1463] and it is also not paralleled in LAn itself.

A more extended analogue to the specifically docetistic notion that the Buddha puts on various kinds of *show* in the world for worldlings is found in the following series of verses (vv. 15-20):

[1462] Tola and Dragonetti 13, Tucci 314-315: *nôdāhṛtaṃ tvayā kiñ cid ekam apy akṣaraṃ vibho/ kṛtsnaś ca vaineyajano dharmavarṣaṇa tarpitaḥ.* Tib: *gco bo khyod kyi[s] gang zhing tu/ yi ge gcig kyang ma gsungs pa// gdul bya'i 'gro ba ma lus pa/ chos kyi chor gyis 'tshim ba'ang mdzad//*

[1463] We noted above another partial match with a different component of Vasumitra's thesis in the MV idea that the Buddha is always in *samādhi*; see n. 1354, 1363. There, however, it was not matched with the idea that the Buddha never speaks.

"The *kleśas,* up to their root, the *vāsanās,* have been subdued by you, O Immaculate One; but the undying (*amṛta*)has been extracted by you from the essence of the *kleśas*(?)(15).[1464]

"The form (*rūpa*) has been seen by you, O Sage, as (something) without character (*lakṣaṇa*) – as no-form (*arūpavat*); but you are seen, in the realm of form (*rūpagocare*), possessing a body resplendent by its characteristics (16).

"It is not by seeing a form (*rūpa*) (of yours) that you are said to be seen; when *dharma* is seen, you are properly seen, but *dharmatā* cannot be seen (17).[1465]

"In your body there is not any orifice, flesh, bones or blood; you have shown a body similar to a rainbow in the sky (18).[1466]

"In your body there is no illness or impurity or appearance of hunger or thirst; (but) in order to comply with the world (*lokânuvṛtti*), you have made a show of worldly behaviour (*laukikī kriyā*) (19).[1467]

"For you, O Immaculate One, there is not any evil constituted by the obstruction of action (*karmâravaṇa*); but out of compassion for the world, you have made a show of the stream of *karma* (*karmapluti*[1468])" (20).[1469]

1464 *kleśaprakṛtitaś caiva tvayâmṛtam upārjitam.* My translation. Tola and Dragonetti read, "the ambrosia (extracted) out of the matter (? for *prakṛti*?) constituted by the *kleśas* has been procured by you".

1465 Translation modified.

1466 Translation modified.

1467 Translation modified.

1468 Translation modified.

1469 Tola and Dragonetti 13-14, Tucci 318-319: *vāsanāmūlaparyantāḥ kleśās te 'nagha nirjitāḥ/ kleśaprakṛtitaś caiva tvayâmṛtam upārjitam//* (15); *alakṣaṇaṃ tvayā dhīra dṛṣṭaṃ rūpam arūpavat/ lakṣaṇojjvalagātraś ca dṛśyase rūpagocare//* (16); *na ca rūpeṇa dṛṣṭena dṛṣṭa ity abhidhīyase/ dharme dṛṣṭe sudṛṣṭo 'si dharmatā* [correcting Tucci's **damartā*] *na ca dṛśyate//* (17); *śauṣiryaṃ nâsti te kāye māṃsâsthirudhiraṃ na ca/ indrâyudham ivâkāśe kāyaṃ darśitavān asi//* (18); *nâmayo nâśuciḥ kāye kṣuttṛṣṇāsambhavo na ca/ tvayā lokânuvṛttyarthaṃ darśitā laukakī kriyā//* (19); *karmâvaraṇadoṣaś ca sarvathānagha nâsti te/ tvayā lokânukampârthaṃ karmaplutiḥ pradarśitā //* (20). Tib: *bag chags gzhir gyur mthar thug pa'i/ khyod kyis nyon mongs sdig pa spangs// nyon mongs* [? Tucci has the incomprehensible **mo'as?*] *nyid kyi rang bzhin yang/ khyod kyi bdud rtsa nyid du bsgrubs//* (15); *dpa' po khyod kyi[s] gzugs rnams kyi/ mtshan ma med mthong gzugs med bzhin// mtshan gyis 'bar*[?] *ba'i sku nyid kyang/ gzugs su spyod lus nyid du mthong//* (16); *gzugs su mthong bas mthong min kyang/ mthong zhes ni rjod par byed* [*sic;* this line metrically deficient]*// chos mthong bas ni shin tu mthong/ chos nyid mthong ba ma yin no//* (17); *. . . khyod kyi sku la med/ sha dang rus ba khrag . . . kyang med// nam mkha' dpa' po'i gzhu bzhin du/ khyod kyi sku ni ston par mdzad//* (18); *sku la snyun med rus pa'ang med/ bkres dang skom pa 'byung med kyang// khyod ni 'jig rten rjes 'jug phyin/ 'jig rten spyod pa'ang bston par mdzad//* (19); *las kyi sgrib pa'i skyon rnams kyang/ sdig med khyod kyi kun spangs kyang// khyod kyis sems can rjes 'jug phyir/ las spangs pa yang rab tu bstan//* (20).

There are obvious resonances here with LAn and/or MV: the Buddha is free of illness (Cf. LAn Tib. v. 34, 76), hunger (v. 32, 44) and thirst (MV 17); he is free of the effects of past *karma* (LAn v. 59, 77); and he manifests a body by a docetistic show (with the charming conceit of the rainbow, not seen elsewhere), along with vulnerability to the effects of *karmic* action, sickness etc. It is perhaps of particular interest that he is specifically stated here to be free of thirst, a detail which is not found in our extant LAn but is found in verses in the "LAn" verse sequence of MV that are not matched in LAn itself.

We also find in this text, however, the explicit statement of an application of the basic docetistic idea that we have not yet seen elsewhere (v. 22):

> "You body is eternal (*nitya*), imperishable (*dhruva*), and auspicious, made of *dharma* [*sic*: *dharmamaya*], and victorious. Still, on account of people to be converted, you made a show of (*darśitā,* Tib. *bstan*) passing away into *nirvāṇa*."[1470]

In other words, the very *parinirvāṇa* of the Buddha itself was a docetistic show. Moreover, this claim is combined with the claim that the Buddha is in fact immortal (a claim which resonates perhaps with the revival of the old language[1471] of *amṛta* in v. 15, cited above) and that it is specifically *his body* that is the locus or vehicle of that immortality. As we will see below (in Ch. 5.1), such claims are otherwise extremely difficult to find so early in the record.[1472] Note the claim that the *parinirvāṇa* was a docetistic show, the explicit statement that the Buddha lives for ever, the use of the word *nitya* to express that claim, and the specification that this permanence is *bodily*. These features of the text combine to create the impression that the

[1470] Tola and Dragonetti 14, Tucci 320-321: *nityo dhruvaḥ śivaḥ kāyas tava dharmamayo jinaḥ/ vineyajanahetoś ca darśitā nirvṛtis tvayā//* Tib: *rtag cing brtan pa zhi ba ye/ chos kyi rang bzhin khyod kyi sku// rgyal bas gdul bya dgrol ba'i phyir/ khyod kyis mya gnan 'das par bstan.* Translation modified.

[1471] See Ch. 2.2.

[1472] Apart from this, the earliest example I know of in which the Buddha's *parinirvāṇa* specfically is said to be a docetistic show is the passage from Dharmarakṣa's translation of the *Tathāgatôtpattisaṃbhavanirdeśa* cited below, n. 2296.

body doctrine of this text is either (a) extraordinarily ahead of its time; (b) to my knowledge, the sole surviving witness of an early discourse that our record only shows significantly later; or (c) not in fact by Nāgārjuna and as early as that attribution would make it.

Indeed, as if to emphasise the fact that the body doctrine of this text is not only out of the ordinary for its time, but simply escapes the categories that emerge from our other evidence altogether, the text also contains a truly remarkable verse (v. 12) that reads:

> "You reach [? *anugata,* 'arrive'?] to all places, and yet you are never born anywhere; in virtue of your [two] bodies (*śarīra*) of birth and *dharma,* you are inconceivable, O Great Sage."[1473]

The dual instrumental (*janmadharmaśarīrābhyām*) makes it absolutely clear[1474] that we are confronted here with a twofold model of the Buddha's embodiment. The terms in which that model is couched, moreover, are highly unusual.

Nowhere else do we find a body referred to as *janma-,* whether *janmakāya* or *janmaśarīra.* The closest analogue to this notion, however, as we will see below, is in the (actual) Sarvâstivāda doctrine of the body opposed to the Buddha's *dharmakāya,* that is, the "body of birth" (see §4.4.4). However, I suggest that that the underlying term is most likely something more like **saṃbhavakāya, *sāṃbhavikakāya* or even **mātṛpitṛsaṃbhavakāya.* As we will see below, however, there is no solid evidence to make us think that this particular Sarvâstivāda twofold model of

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[1473] *sarvatrânugataś câsi na ca jato 'si kutra cit/ janmadharmaśarīrābhyām acinytas tvaṃ mahāmune,* Tola and Dragonetti 13, Tucci 316. Tucci's translation here is so insipid and vague as to be totally unusable: "Thou are followed everywhere, but Thou art born nowhere; oh great ascetic. Thou art beyond our thought, as regards attributes of birth and corporeity," 317. *kun gyi[s] rjes su zhugs gyur kyang/ 'ga' ru 'byung yang ma lags la//skyed dang chos dang sku rnams kyang/ thub chen khyod kyi bsam mi khyab.* Tola and Dragonetti agree that *anugata* is "followed", "Everywhere you are followed, Lord". They seem to translate as if the dual is not dual, but rather, as if three parallel items are involved: "You are unthinkable, o great *muni,* in terms of birth, attributes (*dharma*), body." Is their reading here influenced by a reading of the Tibetan?

[1474] Where it is somewhat ambiguous in Tibetan, *skyed dang chos dang sku rnams kyang*, though in light of the Sanskrit we can conclude that the intention was probably the same.

embodiment is anywhere near as early as Nāgārjuna. It rather emerges quite suddenly in the history of the Sarvâstivāda Abhidharma literature in the **Mahāvibhāṣā* (see §4.4.11), and aside from that text, the place where we find it most plentifully attested is in the **Mahāprajñāpāramitā-śāstra*.[1475] Once again, then, either the present text is inordinately ahead of its time, or else we have to conclude that, at least insofar as its body doctrine might indicate, the ascription of it to Nāgārjuna is dubious.

We should also note that this twofold model of the Buddha's embodiment is inconsistent with that found in *Ratnâvalī* Ch. 3, which we examine in more detail below (§4.5.3). That text speaks of *dharmakāya* and *rūpakāya*. Even if one or the other of these two texts is indeed by Nāgārjuna, then, it seems highly unlikely that both of them would be; why would Nāgārjuna change from one set of terms to another, especially when it is otherwise so unusual for him to treat the problem of the Buddha's embodiments at all (not a word of it in MMK, for instance)?

This verse is also unusual for the additional reason, of course, that it refers to the two bodies entering into this twofold model as *śarīra* and not *kāya*. This attenuates even the partial analogies between its twofold model of embodiment and those of the Sarvâstivāda Abhidharma, and puts the *Niraupamyastava* out on a limb of its own, as an entirely idiosyncratic and *sui generis* text in the context of body doctrine as a whole.

We might also note that the conception already seen above in v. 22, of a body (*kāya*) "made of *dharma*" is also very unusual.

[1475] In light of this possible common feature, it is interesting to consider the possible implications of the traditional but spurious ascription of MPPŚ to Nāgārjuna for the case of the present text.

Lindtner considers the *Catuḥstava* an authentic text of Nāgārjuna, , though he emphasises that he considers this judgement especially sound for I and III, i.e. not for *Niraupamyastava,* which is hymn no. II.[1476] Tola and Dragonetti are cautious; they summarise a range of opinion that shows this opinion is quite well-established in the field, while at the same time noting the dissenting opinion of la Vallée Poussin, and say that they prefer to reserve judgement, with la Vallée Poussin, until such time as a more profound study of the content has been made.[1477] Nonetheless, in light of the extreme extent to which its body doctrine is unusual – for its time and for any time – I am wary of basing any strong claims, especially about chronology, on the present text. It does provide us with more evidence that *lokôttaravāda* were current, that those ideas are associated with a quite clearly Mahāyāna context, as in LAn. There is therefore no particular reason for associating them with the Mahāsāṃghika.

4.2.12 Handling LAn as an exceptional text for its time in the context of the larger history of ideas about embodiment

In §4.2.10 above, I noted that there are a surprisingly large number of respects in which LAn is either the earliest or one of the earliest pieces of evidence I know of for a major idea in the history of embodiments. This extraordinary character of the text confronts me here with a methodological bind, because it presents me with a situation in which two of the main methodological principles I am trying to follow in this study seem to be at direct loggerheads.

First, in all of the respects in which LAn represents "firsts" in doctrinal history, it potentially represents an instance of the "anomalous single instance". As I stated in the Introduction to

[1476] Lindtner, *Nagarjuniana* 122. Perhaps because of his greater confidence in his judgement about them, Lindtner unfortunately confines his further discussion to I and III, which excludes the hymn that most concerns us here.

[1477] Tola and Dragonetti 4-5.

this dissertation,[1478] I attempt to avoid making too much of single exceptional instances like this, since there have been a number of cases in which I believe my predecessors have so been led to construct misleading versions of doctrinal history. Given that LAn is an exception to larger patterns of doctrinal development, it is tempting to consider the possibility that the attribution of the translation to Lokakṣema and the dating of the text might be inaccurate. We might therefore to hesitate before redrawing the overall picture of doctrinal development on its basis.

On the other hand, I have also committed myself to consistently date ideas and the texts in which they appear on criteria independent of constructions of doctrinal or conceptual history, in order to avoid circularity. It would be absurd for me to jettison this principle now. I believe that this fundamental principle is too valuable to sacrifice merely for one embarrassing case. This means that I must bow to the superior judgement of Paul Harrison, who is consistently confident LAn is indeed by Lokakṣema.[1479]

Possible additional support for the existence already in this period of the docetistic ideas I am here calling *lokôttaravāda,* at least, is also found in the *Niraupamyastava* of Nāgārjuna, which we already saw above has been identified by Harrison as containing "distinct echoes" of LAn.[1480]

[1478] See §1.3.7.

[1479] For example, Harrison notes that Dao'an is "tentative" in ascribing the LAn to Lokakṣema, but only to say that the ascription is in fact "totally justified: the work carries most of the hallmarks of his style". "Earliest Chinese Translations" 159. For Dao'an's "tentative" attribution, see T2145.6b26-27, where he lists it among nine texts that "look as if they are translations by Lokakṣema" (似支讖出也). See also "Sanskrit Fragments" 211: "We can . . . be confident that we have here one of the oldest extant examples of Buddhist literature translated into Chinese." Harrison has more recently reiterated this opinion in "Some Reflections" 1.

[1480] Harrison, "Sanskrit Fragments" 224. See, however, §4.2.11 for discussion of possible problems in assigning the unusual ideas of this text to the period of Nāgārjuna himself.

It seems to me, then, that so long as the attribution to Lokakṣema on content-independent grounds stands, the situation constitutes a true methodological impasse. LAn represents a bottleneck for my reconstruction of the history of the development of Buddha-body doctrine. Were the attribution and dating of this one text to be shown to be different, it would require that we shift the dating of certain key ideas in the history of embodiment doctrine: most importantly the docetistic conception of the Buddha, the attribution to the Buddha (or *bodhisattva*) of actual immortality, and possibly the emergence of the doctrine of *dharmakāya* so-named.

For the present, therefore, I will adopt the following admittedly unsatisfactory compromise as a way of handling these uncertainties: in each case where LAn thus represents an earliest instance of an important idea significantly earlier than other evidence, I will tentatively note the fact, but I will not on that basis assume with any confidence that the ideas so evidenced are therefore firmly established as existing at the time we ordinarily consider to be witnessed by Lokakṣema's translations (i.e. the early part of the second century C.E.), but rather, only when they are corroborated by other evidence. This will unfortunately lend a somewhat equivocal and tentative air to some of the more general conclusions of this study as a whole, but this seems to me preferable to overstating my confidence in conclusions based upon such an apparently anomalous piece of evidence, the authoritative opinion of Harrison that the text is indeed Lokakṣema's notwithstanding.

With these considerations in mind, we are now prepared to turn to a summary of the conclusions we can draw from the overall evidence of LAn, and the other Mahāsāṃghika literature surveyed above, about the emergence of docetistic Buddhalogy and its relation to the development of doctrine about the Buddha's embodiments.

4.2.13 Conclusions: the emergence of docetistic Buddhalogy and its relation to the development of ideas about the Buddha's embodiments

In this section of this dissertation, I examined the standard understanding that a major influence was exerted upon the development of Mahāyāna Buddhalogy by a supposed set of Mahāsāṃghika docetistic or *lokôttaravāda* ideas. In examining this claim, I proceeded in two main steps.

First, I surveyed our extant sources for Mahāsāṃghika doctrine. I concluded, first, that many of those sources are irrelevant to the present discussion, since they do not touch upon the ideas I defined for the purposes of this study as *lokôttaravāda*.

I also concluded that all of the texts that remain to provide evidence of Mahāsāṃghika cannot be shown to be early enough to provide solid evidence that *lokôttaravāda* ideas were indeed current among Mahāsāṃghika groups early enough for us to be sure they could have exerted their supposed influence on the formation of Mahāyāna ideas. These considerations of dating even bear, most importantly, on the *Mahāvastu,* which is our main extant source for Mahāsāṃghika-Lokôttaravāda docetistic ideas from their own point of view, and the doxography of Vasumitra, which Bareau argues is the earliest of the doxographical sources available to us. The *Mahāvastu* may have been in the process of composition as late as the fourth century. The *terminus ad quem* for Vasumitra's treatise is the date of the first, Qin translation into Chinese, probably around 400 C.E. and possibly by Kumārajīva.

Noting that these two earliest sources are also our richest sources for the *lokôttaravāda* ideas ascribable to the Mahāsāṃghika, I then proceeded to examine each in turn for what they could tell us about those ideas.

In MV, we noted that most of the *lokôttaravāda* ideas found in the text are concentrated in a single verse sequence shared with the *Lokânuvartanā-sūtra*. We also noted that the few *lokôttaravāda* ideas found outside that sequence in the text cluster around a small subset of *lokôttaravāda* themes, most particularly the basic assertion that the Buddhas are supramundane and the problem of their purity, especially surround the process of the *bodhisattva's* conception, gestation and birth. Following Paul Harrison's seemingly opinion that the exception verse-sequence seems to have been borrowed into MV rather than the other way around, we considered the possibility that the *lokôttaravāda* ideas in MV as a whole might be later than the extant LAn, and therefore that the Mahāsāṃghikas, rather than being the originators of docetistic Buddhalogy, might merely have been the Mainstream group that became most closely associated with those ideas *after* they accepted them from a different context in which they arose. I contend that this interpretation of our record is at least as plausible as the traditional account, which sees the Mahāsāṃghikas as the authors of those ideas.

In examining Vasumitra's treatise, I built on Bareau's parallel analysis of multiple doxographic sources to note that not all the *lokôttaravāda* theses ascribed to the Mahāsāṃghika by the doxographers are created equal. We noted, thus, that the theses ascribed to the school by the most doxographers, that are ascribed to the school by the doxography of southern (Theravāda) as well as northern tradition, and that are ascribed to southern subsects of the school as well as northern subsects, all concentrate around the same subset of *lokôttaravāda* claims and concerns that are found in MV outside the LAn verse sequence: the basic supramundane status of the

Buddha, his purity, and the miraculous or exceptional quality of his conception, gestation and birth. I suggested that this widespread coincidence of evidence for these ideas in both "in-house" Mahāsāṇghika sources and external doxographical perspectives means that we should regard them as a true core of Mahāsāṃghika *lokôttaravāda* ideas. I also noted, however, that the core concept of "conforming to the world", or the overt assertion of anything that might correspond to the notion of *show,* is strikingly absent from this core. Indeed, it was also apparent that this key idea is absent from all the various theses ascribed to the Mahāsāṃghika by the doxographers in general.

Thus, we in fact have evidence only for a somewhat diluted form of docetism among the Mahāsāṃghikas. Even that evidence is rather late, and cannot be shown to be earlier than the fourth century. On the most generous interpretation of its likely date, is hardly sufficient to constitute solid grounds to conclude that the Mahāsāṃghikas were docetistic in the first century; but in order to have influenced the earliest similar Mahāyāna ideas, they would have to have been.

The sole exception to this conclusion is, of course, the verse sequence that MV shares with LAn, but if, as Harrison believes, that sequence in fact originates in LAn and is borrowed therefrom into MV, then it is surely to LAn that we must look for our best information about the contexts in which docetistic Buddhalogy arose. Indeed, this is all the more the case because LAn is datable much earlier than our Mahāsāṃghika sources, on the basis of the Chinese translation of Lokakṣema. I therefore carefully excepted the LAn from the earlier phase of my discussion in which I examined sources for Mahāsāṃghika Buddhalogy because we can only identify as a Mahāsāṃghika or Lokôttaravāda in a circular manner on the basis of its contents, in a period

where we otherwise have no actual evidence that *lokôttaravāda* ideas were in fact current among any Mahāsāṃghika.

Having this set aside the evidentially unsubstantiable claim that the Mahāsāṃghika advocated *lokôttaravāda* ideas early enough to precede LAn, therefore, the second step in my examination of the problem of the origins of those ideas was to examine the evidence of LAn itself, in a manner free from the premature assumption that it shows us anything to do with the Mahāsāṃghika or Lokôttaravāda school.

This examination showed that the *lokôttaravāda* ideas of LAn, and more specifically, what we might call more precisely its "docetism" in the sense that the text claims that much of the Buddha's person and teachings was merely a show "in conformity with the world" (*lokânuvartanā*), is far richer and more detailed than anything found even in later sources for Mahāsāṃghika versions of the same and related ideas, *including* the verse sequence probably borrowed from LAn into MV. We saw, further, that the articulation of this docetism takes place in the context of an articulation by the text of a Mahāyāna metaphysic, which I argued we can accurately characterise as a kind of "metaphysical docetism" (which is also a species of gnosticism), on which the appearances not just of the Buddha's person and career, but all the multifarious appearances of phenomenal reality, are an illusory (even "empty") show that belie the underlying truth of *tathatā,* the *dharmadhātu* etc. Thus, the docetistic interpretation of the Buddha's person and career in LAn is merely part of a broader and more thoroughgoing illusionist doctrine of the apparent phenomenal world. Indeed, the text explicitly links its docetistic doctrine of the Buddha to these broader metaphysical underpinnings, identifying the Buddhas with *dharmas,* the *dharmadhātu* etc., stating that in virtue of this identification they are

in fact one despite the appearance of plurality, and using the identification to explain the differences between the docetistic show mounted by the Buddhas and what is the case in truth.

This metaphysically grounded, earliest and most developed articulation of docetistic Buddhalogy is already linked, in this small but remarkable text, with explicit and striking claims about the Buddha's embodiments, so that we need not fall back on our own etic speculations to draw connections between docetism and body doctrine, but find them already drawn emically at what, in our extant record, comes closest to the very scene of the elaboration of the docetistic conceit. Thus, the Chinese LAn comes as close as we could imagine to actually naming the concept of *dharmakāya* in so many words, and the articulation of this doctrine is related to claims about oneness, emptiness, thusness, the *dharmadhātu* and so on in ways that can scarcely leave any doubt that what is at stake is indeed the familiar Mahāyāna *dharmakāya*. Further, in exploring the contrast between this prototypical embodiment in *dharma* or the *dharmadhātu* as the Buddha's most veritable embodiment and the docetistic appearance of other embodiments, the text actually says in that the Buddha elaborates bodies by magical powers and that aspects of his earthly embodiment are like a mirage; that is to say, it comes very close to articulating the doctrine of *nairmāṇikakāya,* if not necessarily yet by that name. Finally, we also followed Paul Harrison in observing that many elements of the later *sāṃbhogikakāya* are incorporated into the doctrine of embodiment in the text, even while cautiously noting that there are no signs of these elements being fenced off into any separate category of their own as another "type" of embodiment.

Even this much, however, did not exhaust the remarkable set of groundbreaking doctrines found in LAn. It also contains very early instances of the attribution to the Buddha of a body like adamant and seemingly eternal life. I noted that the overall profile of the doctrines of the

text that emerges from such considerations threatens to make it quite strikingly anomalous for the time to which it is assigned by its attribution to Lokakṣema, and further, that this raises methodological difficulties for a study committed, as this one is, to not concluding too much from single unusual instances. I concluded, however, that the combination of Harrison's authoritative opinion that the attribution of LAn is genuine, and the sound principle of dating ideas on criteria relatively independent of ideas, requires that for the time being we nonetheless treat the ideas evinced by the text as already current in the second century.

For the case of the docetistic conceit, at least, this conclusion is perhaps rendered a little less risky by the fact that similar ideas seem to be present in Nāgārjuna's *Niraupamyastava,* which Harrison suggests indeed probably derived those ideas from some form of LAn itself already circulating in Nāgārjuna's time.[1481]

Thus, on the one hand, our sources for the attribution of *lokôttaravāda* ideas to the Mahāsāṃghika are late, and only support the ascription of a diluted form of docetism in any case; whereas, on the other hand, the earliest evidence we have for those ideas, in the LAn, shows them in any extremely rich form, intimately related to an emergent Mahāyāna "metaphysic", and already explicitly related to important and, for their time, groundbreaking ideas about embodiments. I contend that the most economical interpretation of this record is to think that the docetistic interpretation of the Buddha's worldly person and life, and the corollary of that interpretation in the idea that his last worldly body was a mere show, emerged in close connection with the emergent Mahāyāna claim that he was in fact most veritably embodied in *dharma, dharmatā,* the *dharmadhātu* etc. It seems certainly to be the case that a relatively weak echo of these ideas did indeed eventually wind up finding acceptance in some

[1481] Once more, see 1480 above, and §4.2.11.

Mahāsāṃghika contexts, if shorn of the metaphysical underpinnings that motivated them; but, so far as our record shows us, it seems possible, not to say likely, that this occurred *subsequent* to their quite full development in Mahāyāna soil.[1482]

This interpretation has three primary advantages over the standard understanding that sees docetistic Buddhalogy as a Mahāsāṃghika idea. It sticks closer to the facts of our evidential record. It does not see docetistic Buddhalogy as a kind of brute historical fact, which is the best we can do when we assume docetism a product of half-guessed-at Mahāsāṃghika ideas centuries before any evidence for them, motivated by vaguely supposed pietism, the "apotheosis" of the Buddha, etc. Finally, as I hope to demonstrate later in this dissertation, it enables us to locate the emergence of docetism as part of a larger, more accurate, and more economical account of the development of those doctrines.

Those later arguments must wait until we have more pieces of the picture in place. We therefore now turn to another set of key materials for the study of the early post-Pāli-canonical developments: the earliest Prajñāpāramitā texts.

[1482] In this connection, we might note that, although is a minority and late voice in the tradition's own accounts of the events that led to the emergence of the Mahāsāṃghika, Paramārtha relates a version of events in which a major part in those events was played by the incorporation of Mahāyāna texts into the canon; Demiéville, "L'origine" 20; Jizang reports that as early as 200 P.N. they were incorporating *Avataṃsaka, Prajñā* and "other *sūtras* of the Mahāyāna" into their *tripiṭaka*, T1852.8c16-19, Demiéville 41; Paramārtha attributes to them an even longer list of specific Mahāyāna *sūtras,* including in addition MPNS, *Śrīmālādevī, Vimalakīrti* and *Suvarṇaprabhāsa;* Demiéville 43, citing from T2300.459b-460a. whatever may be the rationalising legendary logic at work in the elaboration of this particular aetiological myth, it may be that it, equally with other versions of events, preserves some kernel of historical truth, and is a faint echo of an historical awareness that (some?) Mahāsāṃghika groups were more open to Mahāyāna *influence* than other groups, rather than having been the *source* of ideas that become Mahāyāna.

Chapter 4.3 Various embodiments of the Buddha in the Prajñāpāramitā literature, with particular reference to Lokakṣema's *Aṣṭasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā*

4.3.1 Introduction

In this section of this dissertation, I will look at ideas of embodiment in the early Prajñāpāramitā literature, focusing primarily on the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā* of Lokakṣema and the *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā* of Mokṣala.

I will show that complex ideas of various possibilities of ideal embodiment for the Buddha are already present, and coexist in various relationships and tensions, from the very dawn of that literature in Lokakṣema. The Buddha is most centrally understood to be embodied in his special gnosis, a dimension of the doctrine of embodiments in the text that has hitherto been entirely overlooked. Further, even at its very earliest stages, this literature already contains many of the important constituent elements of a later "classic" Mahāyāna doctrine of *dharmakāya*, whereby the Buddha is also embodied in the Mahāyāna "absolute". This conception of buddhahood is not named by the overt label of *dharmakāya* in Lokakṣema, but this development does take place before the close of the third century. Finally, as Paul Harrison has correctly argued, the Buddha is also understood to be embodied in plural *buddhadharmas,* in an understanding that these Mahāyāna texts share in broad outline (but perhaps not in all specific details) with scholastics like the Sarvâstivādins.

A key aim of the present section will be to refute Paul Harrison's claims that our earliest Mahāyāna materials do not show any signs of this "classic" Mahāyāna *dharmakāya*, but rather, that all conceptions of the Buddha's embodiments found therein can be explained in terms of a putative "Mainstream" *dharmakāya*. I have already argued aspects of my disagreement with Harrison on this point in the previous section (Ch. 4.2), and will continue to develop it

throughout the present section. In a postscript to this section (§4.3.13), I summarise my disagreement with Harrison's "Mainstream *dharmakāya*" thesis.

Even before the development of the term *dharmakāya,* I suggest that Lokakṣema's interesting uses of *fashen* 法身 may well be a significant application of the corporeal conceit to these emergent notions. In so doing I will be arguing against Harrison once more. Harrison attempts to show that Lokakṣema's uses of *fashen* are mere red herrings because they correspond to terms like *sarvadharmāḥ* and *dharmadhātu* in (later) alternate Chinese and Tibetan versions of the same works. However, I will attempt to show that significant components of the later "classic" Mahāyāna *dharmakāya* are already present in the contexts and concepts to which Lokakṣema applies this idiosyncratic translation term.

I will reinforce this suggestion that Lokakṣema's use of the corporeal conceit in these connections is significant by studying a significant set of passages in Lokakṣema's *Aṣṭa.* Here, the text is clearly concerned to emphasise the corporeal conceit in application to other conceptions of buddhahood. These passages clearly show that Lokakṣema, or the phase of Prajñāpāramitā his translation represents, was keenly interested in the problem of the Buddha's embodiment. In these respects, the present study will not merely disagree with prior research, but go well beyond it. The passages I refer to have been disregarded by previous literature on the topic of the Buddha's embodiments, most likely because they mention none of the "standard" terms for well-known kinds of embodiment. And yet, these passages provide clear evidence that already at the dawn of our record, as represented by Lokakṣema's *Aṣṭa,* the Prajñāpāramitā literature was home to a rich discourse about multiple possibilities of embodiment for the Buddha and their relative "merits".

These conceptions of embodiment go well beyond anything observable in earlier layers of our record, and even further beyond the circumscribed range of possibilities envisaged under the rubric of Harrison's "Mainstream" *dharmakāya.* In fact, it is the ideas found in these additional, hitherto unstudied passages that constitute the true centre of the overall range of conceptions of embodiment to be found in Lokakṣema's *Aṣṭa.* For this reason, I will begin this section with an examination of these passages. Here, Lokakṣema's *Aṣṭa* is almost uniquely emphatic in its application of the corporeal conceit to the central *prajñāpāramitā* idea that special kinds of gnosis are the most quintessential feature of buddhahood, and the fountainhead from which all other features and qualities of buddhahood spring. These special kinds of gnosis are spoken of variously under the heads of *jñāna* and *bodhi* as well as by the name of *prajñāpāramitā* itself. More particularly, as we will see, key passages in the text speak of the Buddha as embodied in *sarvajñatā* or "omniscience", which is closely associated with *anuttarasaṃyaksaṃbodhi* ("unsurpassed perfect awakening"). We will also see the claim that the Buddha is embodied in the five "pure aggregates" (*anāsravaskandha*), among which the corporeal conceit is particularly strongly associated with the last, *vimuktijñāna*[-*darśana*] – which is also, notably, a kind of gnosis.

When studying this notion of the Buddha as most veritably embodied in his gnosis, we will also note that it is continuous with the Sarvâstivādin understanding, which we will study in detail in Chapter 4.4. As John Makransky has clearly shown in the years since the publication of Harrison's study, a careful reading of those sources shows that the notion of *dharmakāya* is understood there as embodiment in *bodhi* and its "attendants", where *bodhi* is parsed as special kinds of *jñāna,* and the attendants are most typically precisely the same five pure aggregates we shall discover spoken of as embodiments in Lokakṣema.[1483]

[1483] Paul Harrison ironically appeals in part to Sarvâstivāda sources in characterising what he calls the "Mainstream" *dharmakāya,* and yet his study betrays no awareness of the understanding of buddhahood as embodied in gnosis, either in "Mainstream" contexts, or in the Mahāyāna texts. Yet gnosis is indeed a veritable embodiment of the Buddha in these sources. It is further scarcely more coherent to speak of

The Buddha is further acknowledged in these texts to be legitimately and veritably embodied in his final earthly body and the relics that remain as vestiges of that body. However, the value of this form of embodiment, comparative to the Buddha's most veritable embodiment in his gnosis, is strenuously downplayed. One significant task of this section will be to argue that these complex ideas about the Buddha's embodiments cannot be properly understood apart from the context of a vigorous polemic against the supremacy of relics as objects of merit-making cultic practice.[1484] It is notable, then, that the "gnostic" conceptions of the Buddha's most veritable embodiment are elaborated precisely in the context of the polemic against the supremacy of the Buddha's relics as objects of merit-making cultic practice. The specific "ontological" or aetiological relations between *sarvajñatā* as an embodiment and other embodiments, including the relics, is one of the questions at issue. In the context of this polemic against relics, I will argue that it is probably also significant that we have already seen blurry prolepses of the notion of embodiment in gnosis (*bodhi*) in what is said about relics in the Senavarma inscription (see above, §4.1.2.5).

Thus, the present section of this dissertation will proceed as follows. I will first study the "gnostic" embodiments of the Buddha, the relation claimed for them to relics and other forms

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the Buddha's gnosis, as an embodiment, in the plural, than it is to speak of *dharma* in the plural where it refers to the Mahāyāna "absolute". This means that even in this significant instance where the notion of the Buddha's most veritable embodiment is indeed common to both Mahāyāna and Mainstream contexts, it does not in fact so unequivocally support a reading of *dharma* in the plural as Harrison would like, further undermining Harrison's assertion that *dharma-* in *dharmakāya* must consistently be construed in the plural in these materials. See further §4.3.13.

[1484] Much of what I will argue in this section is new, and some of the materials I will adduce have in fact not even been studied in the secondary literature to date. I must here acknowledge, however, that Kajiyama Yūichi's excellent small article "Stūpas, the Mother of Buddhas, and Dharma-body" anticipates parts of my argument. Specifically, Kajiyama argues that aspects of the doctrine of embodiments in *prajñāpāramitā* must be understood as a reaction against the understand of relics as bodies, and that the main features of the "classic" Mahāyāna conception of the *dharmakāya* are present in the texts before they are identified by that name.

of embodiment, and the relation of the elaboration of these concepts to their context in the polemic against relics. I will then go on to advance my specific reasons for disagreeing with main members of Harrison's central thesis. To this end, I will show that important nascent conceptions of the *dharmakāya* are indeed present in the materials, though not yet under the name of *dharmakāya.* Finally, I will consider conceptions of the Buddha's embodiment found in Mokṣala's *Pañca.* In these texts, the term *dharmatā* is clearly used in contexts where embodiment is at stake, and we also see a clear instance in which the term *dharmakāya* itself is identified with the Mahāyāna "absolute" (in the guise of *dharmatā*). This establishes that the "classic" Mahāyāna reading, by the name of *dharmakāya,* dates no later than Mokṣala's time. Finally, in the conclusion to this section, I broaden my view to consider the relation of these findings to the broader narrative of development of ideas about embodiment, before summarising my disagreement with Harrison in a postscript to the section.

4.3.2 Models of embodiment proposed in explicit opposition to relics in Lokakṣema's *Aṣṭa*

I will begin with a passage from Chapter Three of *Aṣṭa*, which in Lokakṣema is called the "Merit" chapter (功德品).[1485] In this chapter we encounter a central theme of the text, that is, the claim that much greater merit accrues to the cult of *prajñāpāramitā* than to other cultic activities. This is already in a context of the "cult of the book", an aspect of the early Mahāyāna literature to which Gregory Schopen aptly drew attention in 1975.[1486] The claim of this text, which is

[1485] Corresponding to Ch. 3 in Skt, *Aprameyaguṇadhāraṇapāramitāstūpasatkāraparivarta.*

[1486] Schopen, "The Phrase". Tillman Vetter is wrong, in his response to Schopen, to imply that the earliest Chinese translations of Prajñāpāramitā texts somehow undermine Schopen's argument that the cult of the book was an important factor in the early development of Mahāyāna. See Vetter, "On the Origin", 1266-1272: "the context of the quoted passages and their (partial) absence in early Chinese versions . . . do not support Schopen's assumption [!] that in Mahāyāna the cult of the book precedes the cult of the *stūpa*", 1266. (This is surely an inaccurate characterisation of Schopen's claims. He does not "assume" the role of the cult of the book, but sets out to demonstrate it on the basis of evidence. Further, his aim is to show that it plays a central and hitherto underemphasised role in the rise of the Mahāyāna, but not, so far as I can see, necessarily to show that it "*precedes* the cult of the *stūpa*". Indeed, Schopen himself recognises that "the cult of the book . . . had to contend at every step with the historical priority

repeated at some length and with ever more hyperbolic rhetorical conceit, is that the merit of taking hold of, preserving, honouring, worshipping and adoring these texts is far greater than

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and the dominance of the *stūpa*/relic cult"; his contention is merely that there is nothing identifiably *Mahāyāna* about this prior cult, which he has shown elsewhere to have been very widespread in a broad range of sectarian contexts.) Vetter goes on, "An explicit opposition between the cult of the book and the cult of relics can be found in the . . . Sanskrittext [*sic*] of the *Aṣṭa* . . . . None of the corresponding passages in the early Chinese translations of the *Aṣṭa* . . . . reflects a Sanskrit text containing the phrase *pṛthivīpradeśaś caityabhūto bhavet* or the word *caitya* . . . . T224 . . . . shows there already existed a written form of the text, but it was *not in high esteem*" (1267, my emphasis). Vetter is discussing the same passage discussed and translated in the present section of this dissertation, and its immediately preceding context (T224.431c22-432a26). And yet, despite the absence of the "*Vajracchedika* phrase" (*sa prthivīpradeśaś . . .*), it is clear that Lokakṣema's *Aṣṭa* is here indeed promoting a cult of the book. In T224 we see, in the very context Vetter is citing, a clear instance of the basic idea Schopen studies, i.e. that the text is a place to be worshipped (even if not, admittedly, stated in the exact words of the *formula* he studies): see, e.g. T224.431c22-432a5, corresponding to Conze 105. It is, moreover, clear that the text envisaged is written, because the text speaks e.g. of "taking hold of the scrolls of the text" even where one cannot recite or practise it, 當持其經卷, T224.431c23; speaks repeatedly of "writing" (*shu* 書) the text, in passages too numerous to list, but which a search through the text for this word will readily bring up: e.g. 般若波羅蜜書者持經卷者, T224.432a05-06; 若有拘翼善男子善女人書般若波羅蜜學持誦行 T224.432a20-21; and, less often, of "copying" (*xie* 寫) it: 般若波羅蜜寫已。作是供養經卷 T224.432a23-24; 善男子善女人。但書寫持經卷。自歸作禮承事供養 T224.435b27-28. Indeed, even Vetter himself goes on to note that, as we will see below, "propaganda for *prajñāpāramitā* had already reached such hyperbolic dimensions that venerating its written form . . . is considered to give higher merit than venerating a *stūpa* with relics of the Buddha", 1268. Clearly, then, there was indeed a cult of the book in the Mahāyāna culture of this time to which Lokakṣema's text attests, and that it was claimed that it was more efficacious as a merit-making practice than the cult of the relics. This means that here, in our earliest Mahāyāna texts, we have evidence for the existence of both cults, but that in this text at least, the cult of the book is moreover explicitly favoured, exactly as Schopen points out. Vetter's argument that Schopen is wrong in thinking the cult of the book was an important component in early Mahāyāna therefore seems only to rest on his assertion that the "written form of the text . . . was not [held] in high esteem". He makes this argument on the basis of T224.431c22-432a05. Prior to this paragraph, the text has been promising all manner of apotropaic worldly benefits for this who can learn 學, "hold" 持 (**dhārayanti*, perhaps meaning "memorise") and recite 誦 the text: they will be immune from harm in battle and so forth. In this passage, the emphasis turns to those who are unable to learn, "hold" or recite it; if they can nonetheless get hold of ("hold", 持 once more) a written copy of the text 般若波羅蜜書已。雖不能學不能誦者, then they, too, will realise great apotropaic benefits: men, ghosts and gods will not harm them, nor wild beasts etc. Now, Vetter seems to have a limited point when he notes that the text here regards as lesser the achievements of those who merely possess the text but (seemingly being illiterate) cannot read it, and therefore promises them less protection than those who can. However, there is no justification for his claim, on this slender basis, that the "written form of the text was not [held] in high esteem". The point seems rather to be that the text is held in *such* high esteem that even as a sheer physical object, to which the possessor has, hypothetically, no cognitive relationship whatsoever, it is more powerful and meritorious than a trichilicosm full of reliquary *stūpas,* as the text goes on to emphasise at great length (the lengthy comparisons are phrased precisely in terms of relics vs. this uncomprehending cultic relation to the text as a physical object: 若有天中天。般若波羅蜜書者持經卷者。自歸作禮承事供養 etc., e.g. T224.432a05-06). Thus, despite Vetter's objections, we can conclude that at least as early as Lokakṣema, Schopen's "cult of the book" is indeed an important component of Prajñāpāramitā thought and practice, and we can feel secure in interpreting even this earliest version of the *Aṣṭa* in its context.

that of "deposit[ing] in *stūpas* the relics of the Tathāgata who has gone to *parinirvāṇa*";[1487] this is the case no matter how inordinately numerous the relics and *stūpas* so worshipped might be by comparison.[1488]

The Lokakṣema version of the text is somewhat difficult, and the following translation is based upon some repunctuation of the Taishō and some interpretation that is guided by parallels in the Sanskrit text.[1489] On the points that concern us most here, however, that is, on the relevance of the passage for doctrines of embodiment, the text is clear enough, and the reader should simply bear in mind that I have not sought to solve every problem with other aspects of the text, so that the following translation is otherwise tentative:

> "What do you think, O Kauśika? From studying in what Dharma did the Tathāgata, the Arhat, the Saṃyaksaṃbuddha, attain *anuttarasamyaksaṃbodhi,* such that he brought to completion such a (是)[1490] body, [that is,] he brought to completion *sarvajñatā*?[1491] . . . It

[1487] Conze, *Aṣṭa* 105; in Lokakṣema, 若般泥洹後。持佛舍利起塔, T224.432a07-08.

[1488] " . . . many *koṭis* of *stūpas* made of the seven precious things", Conze, *Aṣṭa* 107; "one who would completely fill the entire Jambudvīpa with such *stūpas*"; "the merit produced by all beings in a four-continent world system if each single one of them were to build such a *stūpa*"; if all beings in a small chiliocosm, or a medium dichiliocosm, or in a great trichiliocosm would do likewise" etc; Conze, *Aṣṭa* 108. These hyperboles are basically matched in spirit, if not in all details, by Lokakṣema's version: if someone should carry on the cult of the reliquary *stūpa* for their entire lifetime, T224.432b17-24; if they were to fill the entirety of Jambudvīpa, 432 b25-c10; all four continents, 432c11-433a05; "three thousand continents" ("worlds", *sic* 三千天下), T433a06-17, etc.

[1489] It seems clear, on the basis of comparison with other versions of the text, that aspects of this passage is somewhat garbled, and that this confusion is multiplied by the Taishō punctuation. In particular, the most significant problems are: (1) the incomprehensible repetition of *sayiruoshen* = **sarvajñatākāya* in the sentence 怛薩阿竭阿羅呵三耶三佛薩芸若身薩芸若身生; (2) the Taishō punctuation obscures the fact that, as in other texts, a consistent logic running through the passage proposes a two-step genesis of the Buddha and his body whereby (i) *prajñāpāramitā* produces *sarvajñatā* and (ii) *sarvajñatā* in turn produces the physical body of the Buddha. I have repunctuated and translated accordingly.

[1490] This pronoun in particular seems to have lost some of its meaning in the garbling of the text in the translation or transmission process; see n. 1491 for the justification for this translation.

[1491] 怛薩阿竭阿羅呵三耶三佛薩芸若(。)成[。]是身出見。怛薩阿竭從何法中(。)學[。]得阿耨多羅三耶三佛 The syntax of this sentence is difficult, but it seems most likely that it is intended to convey the same meaning as the Buddha's opening question in Skt., *yo 'yaṁ tathāgatasyārhataḥ samyaksaṁbuddhasya sarvajñatātmabhāvo 'bhinirvartitaḥ, sa katamasyāṁ pratipadi śikṣamāṇena tathāgatenârhatā samyaksaṁbuddhena anuttarā samyaksaṁbodhiḥ sarvajñatā pratilabdhā abhisaṁbuddhā,* Vaidya 29.6-10; "By study in what kind of path was *anuttarasaṃyaksaṃbodhi,* characterised by omniscience, attained and

> is from study in the *prajñāpāramitā* that the Tathāgata has acquired *anuttarasaṃyaksaṃbodhi* . . . . It is not because of the (physical) body i.e. *śarīra* (*ātmabhāvaśarīra*), but rather from *sarvajña*[-*tā*] that Buddha[-hood] is attained; for (?爲) the Tathāgata is produced from *prajñāpāramitā.* For (如是, *yathā*?), O Kauśika, *the body of sarvajñatā* (薩芸若身, **sarvajñatâtmabhāva;*[1492] my emphasis) issues from *prajñāpāramitā*; [and] *anuttarasaṃyaksaṃbodhi* is produced [in turn] by the body of *sarvajñatā.* [Thus,] the body [in which] I become [a] Buddha is obtained from *sarvajñatā;* the body [in which I] become a Buddha is produced from *sarvajñatā*. After I enter *parinirvāṇa*, [my] relic-body (*śarīra*) will be worshipped as before.[1493] If, Kauśika, sons or daughters of good family write the *prajñāpāramitā,* uphold it, recite it, put it into practice, take refuge in it, pay obeisance to it, serve it, or worship it with fine flowers . . . (etc.)".[1494]

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awakened to by the Tathāgata-Arhat, such that [*yo*] this [*ayam*] omniscience-body of the Tathāgata, the Arthat, the Saṃyaksambuddha, was manifested?" I thus read 薩芸若成是[=*yo*]身出見 as a whole as a translationese equivalent to *yo yam . . . sarvajñatâtmabhāvo abhinirvartitaḥ,* and the sentence ending with it as a subordinate clause. Admittedly, it seems likely that it would have been difficult for a reader with only this Chinese before them to extract precisely this meaning, but we must keep in view the fact that the primary questions that concern us here are of the conceptual evolution to which the text attests, even in its hypothetical underlying Indic version, and not questions of its reception or interpretation in the Chinese context. It seems that *shi* 是身 in particular is very difficult to understand given the peculiar fact that here, unlike the Sanskrit, *sarvajña*-[*tā*] is *not* referred to specifically as a kind of body, but it is possible to imagine that the sentence was intended to correspond to something very like our Sanskrit thus: 怛薩阿竭阿羅呵三耶三佛、薩芸若成 , 是身出見[;]怛薩阿竭從何法中學、得阿耨多羅三耶三佛？ "The *sarvajña* of Tathāgata-Arhat-Saṃyaksambuddha has been brought to completion; such a body [referring to *sarvajñatā* as a body] has appeared – from what Dharma did the Tathāgata study in order to [thus] obtain *anuttarasaṃyaksaṃbodhi*?"

[1492] I suggest this Sanskrit equivalent on the basis of the passage cited in n. 1491 above.

[1493] Cf. Skt. *mama parinirvṛtasyāpi sataḥ eṣāṁ śarīrāṇāṁ pūjā bhaviṣyati.* This sentence has a clear analogue in the later Sanskrit version, but its meaning is obscured by the Taishō punctuation. It is partly on the basis of this repunctuation that I have worked backwards through the passage and repunctuated earlier sentences about the relation between *prajñāpāramitā,* what this text calls the **sarvajñatākāya,* and the visible physical body (*ātmabhāvaśarīra*) of the Buddha in his final lifetime and the relics that body leaves behind (*śarīrāṇi*). It is unclear, however, exactly what the text wishes to convey here by this statement that the relics will still be worshipped after the *parinirvāṇa,* a problem to which I return below, p. 708. Soon below, the Lokakṣema text explains the reason the relics are worshipped after the Tathāgata's *parinirvāṇa* according to its somewhat idiosyncratic interpretation of the simile of the heavenly gem, T224.436a15-24, corresponding to Conze 117-118.

[1494] Round brackets indicate a Taishō punctuation mark that I believe is in error. Square brackets indicate a punctuation mark I have inserted, against the Taishō: 佛言 . . . 云何拘翼。怛薩阿竭阿羅呵三耶三佛薩芸若(。)成[。]是身出見。怛薩阿竭從何法中(。)學[。]得阿耨多羅三耶三佛 . . . . 怛薩阿竭從般若波羅蜜中(。)學[。]得阿耨多羅三耶三佛 . . . . 不用身舍利。從薩芸若中得佛(。)怛薩阿竭[。] (Cf. Skt., *nânenātmabhāva-śarīra-pratilambhena tathāgatas tathāgata iti saṁkhyāṁ gacchati. sarvajñatāyāṁ tu pratilabdhāyāṁ tathāgatas tathāgata iti saṁkhyāṁ gacchati,* Vaidya 29.11-12*;* if Ch. is supposed to match this, we would have to translate differently) . . . 爲出般若波羅蜜中。如是拘翼。薩芸若身從般若波羅蜜中出。怛薩阿竭阿羅呵三耶三佛[薩芸若身?](。)薩芸若身生[。]我作佛身(。)從薩芸若得[。]作佛身(。)從薩芸若生[。]我般泥洹後[,]舍利(。)供養如故。若有拘翼善男子善女人書般若波羅蜜學持誦行。自歸作禮承事供養。好華 . . . ; T224.432a10-26.

The passage concludes by saying, in keeping with the general theme of these chapters, that the merit that will accrue to the worship of *prajñāpāramitā* texts will be far greater than the merit accruing to worship of relics (or any other form of merit-making activity).

Previous scholarship on Buddha bodies has not noticed this passage, nor recognised the extent to which its central concern is a *corporeal* problematic, though it seems clear to me that this passage definitely evinces such a concern. It seems likely that this neglect is for three interrelated reasons. The first is that, as we have seen, the whole cult of relics has not been recognised as part of the overall field of discourse about embodiments of the Buddha. Second, the *terminology* used in the Sanskrit corresponding to this passage is different from the terminology of *kāya*; indeed, the word occurs nowhere in the passage. The text rather speaks of two counterpoised kinds of *ātmabhāva*: *ātmabhāvaśarīra,* the "body as in *śarīra*", that is, the physical body, and the *sarvajñatâtmabhāva,* the "body of omniscience". Previous scholarship on Buddha-bodies, however, as we have repeated cause to note in the course of this study, has been fixated on the term *kāya,* to the neglect of any ideas formulated in the terms of other words for "body". Third, the difficulty here is increased by the probably related fact that Edward Conze, in his English translation of the text, does not translate *ātmabhāva* as "body", but rather as "personality"; to obfuscate matters further, he obscures the place of this passage in the polemic against relics, and the connection between these two kinds of bodies, by translating *ātmabhāvaśarīra* "physical body" here, but translating *śarīra* relics soon afterwards, and translating the unusual notions of *buddhaśarīra, dharmaśarīra, saṃghaśarīra* as "Buddha-*body*" etc. in the same context![1495] This makes it even more difficult for anyone working with the translation to notice the play on the various applications and senses of the word *śarīra,* and the related word *ātmabhāva,* that run throughout this passage.

[1495] Conze, *Aṣṭa* 105, 106.

When we read this passage in light of the theme of embodiment that clearly does run throughout it, however, we note two quite significant features.

First, in this passage, alternative visions of the way the Buddha can be embodied are presented explicitly in the context of the text's frontal challenge to relic worship as the most powerful merit-making activity. This is, moreover, already the case in Lokakṣema, that is to say, in the very earliest layer of the record as it takes up the story of Buddhist ideas immediately after what we are here calling the "black box" period intervening between the latest Pāli-canonical evidence and the earliest Chinese translations.

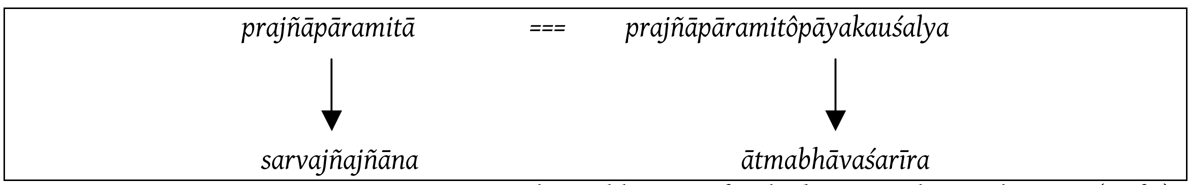
Indeed, if anything, the fact that the problematic here is corporeal is in some respects *even clearer* in Lokakṣema than it was to become in later versions of the text. In order to show that this is so, it will be helpful to compare the same passage in the Sanskrit version (the translation is almost entirely Conze's, with the exception of terms for body and related terms, which I have altered to make them more transparent and more comparable with my own translation above):

> "The Tathāgata, when he had acquired and known full enlightenment (*anuttarā saṃyaksaṃbuddhi*) or omniscience (*sarvajña*), in which practices did he train the body of omniscience (*sarvajñatâtmabhāva*) which he had brought forth? . . . . It is because the Lord has trained himself in just this perfection of wisdom that the Tathāgata has acquired and known full enlightenment and omniscience . . . . Therefore the Tathāgata does not derive his name from the fact that he has acquired this (physical) body i.e. *śarīra* (*ātmabhāvaśarīra*),[1496] but from the fact that he has acquired omniscience (*sarvajñatā*). And this omniscience of the Tathāgata has come forth from the perfection of wisdom. The (physical) body i.e. *śarīra* of the Tathāgata, on the other hand, is the result of skill in means of the perfection of wisdom."[1497]

[1496] Conze has "physical personality" for *ātmabhāvaśarīra,* but see n. 951.

[1497] Conze 105-106: *yo'yaṁ tathāgatasyârhataḥ samyaksaṁbuddhasya sarvajñatâtmabhāvo 'bhinirvartitaḥ, sa katamasyāṁ pratipadi śikṣamāṇena tathāgatenârhatā samyaksaṁbuddhena anuttarā samyaksaṁbodhiḥ sarvajñatā pratilabdhā abhisaṁbuddhā . . . . ihaiva bhagavan bhagavatā prajñāpāramitāyāṁ śikṣamāṇena tathāgatenârhatā samyaksaṁbuddhena anuttarā samyaksaṁbodhiḥ sarvajñatā pratilabdhā abhisaṁbuddhā . . . . tasmāt tarhi kauśika nânenâtmabhāva-śarīra-pratilambhena tathāgatas tathāgata iti saṁkhyāṁ gacchati. sarvajñatāyāṁ tu pratilabdhāyāṁ tathāgatas tathāgata iti saṁkhyāṁ gacchati. yêyaṁ kauśika sarvajñatā*

As can be seen from a comparison with this version and from a look at the passages I have underlined in my translation above, Lokakṣema's text alone, of all the versions of the text that have come down to us, speaks so volubly of a "body of omniscience" (*sarvajñatâtmabhāva*).[1498] In our extant Sanskrit text this term only appears a single time (in a context where it is, moreover, not exactly paralleled in Lokakṣema's Chinese).[1499] Generally, with this single exception, the Sanskrit text simply speaks of *sarvajñatā* being produced from *prajñāpāramitā,* in virtue of which the Tathāgata has the name of 'Tathāgata'; his physical body, on the other hand, is a product of skill in means (*upāyakuśala*) in *prajñāpāramitā.*[1500]



The problematic of embodiment in the Sanskrit *Aṣṭa* (1 of 2)

In order to fully understand the reasons and significance of this model in the Sanskrit text, it will be necessary to consider further aspects of the text not paralleled in Lokakṣema. I will return to that task below, but here, for the moment, will continue to focus primarily on the Lokakṣema version of the text.

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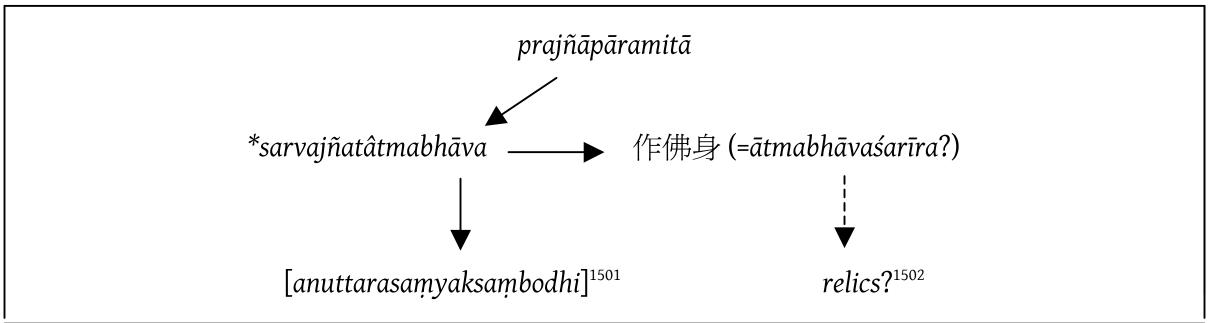
tathāgatasyârhataḥ samyaksaṁbuddhasya, prajñāpāramitānirjātaîṣā. eṣa ca kauśika tathāgatasyâtmabhāvaśarīrapratilambhaḥ prajñāpāramitôpāyakauśalyanirjātaḥ san . . . Vaidya 29.6-14.

[1498] For an incidental, very strange echo of the conception of the Buddha as embodied in omniscience here, cf. the following line in Lokakṣema's *Akṣobhyavyūha.* Describing the various joys awaiting *bodhisattvas* reborn into Akṣobhya's Buddha-land, the text says such "*bodhisattva-mahāsattvas* will see certain hundreds of thousands of Tathāgatas; they will see countless Buddha's; <u>they will see countless *sarvajñatā*</u>[!];"菩薩摩訶薩當見若干百千如來。當見無數佛。當見無數薩芸若, T313.760c25-27. In other words, omniscience is regarded as something of which one can "take *darśan*" in a manner exactly parallel to a Tathāgata or Buddha!

[1499] This is the passage cited above n. 1491, for which compare the Chinese for the sentence to which I have appended this note in my translation.

[1500] We might note that there are obvious analogues between this twofold model of dimensions or functions of wisdom and the later Yogācāra concepts of *nirvikalpakajñāna* and *tatpṛṣṭhalabdhajñāna.*

In Lokakṣema, by contrast to the Sanskrit, the text consistently speaks of a "*body* of *sarvajñatā*" being produced from *prajñāpāramitā,* and *anuttarasaṃyaksaṃbodhi* being produced in turn from that "body of *sarvajñatā*". There is no mention of skilful means at all. And this body of omniscience of the Tathāgata has come forth from the perfection of wisdom:



The problematic of embodiment in Lokakṣema's *Aṣṭa*

The models of the two texts are thus very different. In the Lokakṣema version, however, it is of interest to us here that the most direct offshoot of *prajñāpāramitā* itself is spoken of as a kind of *body* (an *ātmabhāva*), which is, moreover, contrasted with the physical body associated with relics. In the context of the present polemic against the primacy of relics as objects of merit-making cultic activity, I suggest that the clearest motivation we can posit for this fact is that there was a felt need to opposed to the very "corporeal" relics (*śarīrāṇi,* "bodies") a *different mode of embodiment or corporeality*. It will be one of my larger aims in this dissertation to argue that such a polemical imperative to oppose the corporeality of relics was one significant factor in the genesis of other forms of "special Buddha body" discourse, and in particular, of ideas that eventually played out into forms of embodiment labelled by various *kāya* terminology. In the

[1501] I place this item in brackets because there is no reason to think that it is treated as a body of any kind by the text, even though it features in the present passage.

[1502] We will return below, p. 708 and §4.3.3, to the difficulties posed by the relation between *prajñāpāramitā,* the *ātmabhāvaśarīra* and relics in the Lokakṣema version of the text.

present case, as I will argue further below, it seems clear that we are dealing with a significant prototype of what was soon to be explicitly labelled the *dharmakāya.*

In sum, then, in virtue of its additional emphasis on the corporeality of omniscience as a kind of body, the Lokakṣema version of the text can be said to emphasise corporeality even more strongly than the Sanskrit version of the text. As we shall see below, when we discuss further the Sanskrit version, there is a contrasting respect in which the Sanskrit emphasises corporeality in a different manner, though one that seems also clearly part of the overall polemic against relics as Buddha bodies. For the moment, however, we will continue our analysis of the Lokakṣema version of the text, turning our attention to a second significant aspect of its doctrine of embodiment.

The second significant feature of the Lokakṣema text's model of embodiment here, apart from its strong emphasis on corporeality *per se,* is the content of that model. The model of corporeal conditions and concomitants to enlightenment that the text here advances is understood as comprised, most genuinely and essentially, of *sarvajñatā* and *anuttarasaṃyaksaṃbodhi.* In other words, we are not merely confronted here with a mode of embodiment that is proposed as alternative and superior to relics, but that embodiment is a kind of gnosis. There are obvious continuities here with other ideas about ideal bodies.

In one direction, this understanding of a form of knowledge, *jñāna* or *bodhi* as a (or *the*) veritable embodiment of the Buddha recalls to mind the ideas we discovered in the Inscription of Senavarma.[1503] There, we saw that the text of the inscription laid heavy emphasis on the twofold description both of the *bodhi,* or realisation, of the Buddha, and the Dharma he so

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[1503] See above p. 556.

realised. The Dharma was said to "rest" in the relic, and the *bodhi* in virtue of which the Buddha enshrined was worthy of veneration was central to in a lengthy description of the relic (*śarīra*) as the object enshrined and venerated, coupled with the description of his final body (also *śarīra*) as somehow a basis upon which that realisation was attained (Senavarma had **niśrayitvā*, recalling *āśrayaṃ niśritya* of the Sanskrit version only of the present passage).

In the other direction, the present passage also calls to mind the understanding of *dharmakāya* found in Sarvâstivāda scholasticism, e.g. in the *Abhidharmakośa* – a set of ideas we have already linked to our discussion of Schopen's argument that relics are understood to be alive on the basis of the inscriptional formula that states they are "quickened" (*paribhāvita*) with the five pure aggregates (*anāsravaskandha*). As we will also see in more detail below, the Sarvâstivāda understanding seems to have been that the *dharmakāya* is comprised of *bodhi,* which is constituted by a set of *aśaikṣadharma* or "qualities (*dharma*) of one who no longer needs to learn"; *bodhi* is in turn primarily instantiated in two kinds of *jñāna,* namely *kṣayajñāna* ("knowledge of destruction [of the *kleśas*]") and *anutpādajñāna* ("knowledge that [the *kleśas*] will not arise again"), but also by a set of qualities "attendant" upon these *jñānas,* i.e. the five pure aggregates. As we shall see, this same understanding seems basically to be shared by the supposedly earlier **Mahāvibhāṣā,* which may not place it too distant in time from the *Aṣṭa* passage we are considering here.

In both cases, therefore, we seem to have a close association between *bodhi* (and, in the case of the Senavarma relics, the Dharma realised) and an embodiment of the Buddha. In the case of the Senavarma Inscription, difficulties with the text make this reading tentative, and the exact nature of the connection somewhat obscure; but in the case of the AK doctrine, it is clear that the *dharmakāya* is, most essentially, *bodhi.* Though the specific terms, and the details of the

relations among them, differ to some degree, it is striking that in the present Lokakṣema passage, we also encounter an idea embodiment of the Buddha which is comprised of a kind of special gnosis (*sarvajñatā/sarvajñatâtmabhāva*) and *bodhi* (*anuttarasaṃyasaṃbodhi*). Viewed in this light, it seems most plausible to see these various doctrines of ideal embodiments of the Buddha as sharing a common underlying tendency to see *bodhi* and the *jñānas* that comprise it as somehow essential, if not indeed *most* essential, to the true embodiment of Buddhahood.

Incidentally, this conception of embodiment undermines Harrison's claim that insofar as the Buddha is understood to have special embodiments, the main sense of "body" is "collection or collective", i.e. a figurative sense that fits his claim that the *dharma-* of *dharmakāya* is to be construed in the plural (Harrison, of course, makes the argument only for *dharmakāya*).[1504] The model of ideal embodiment found in the present passage, however, whereby the Buddha is embodied in his awakening, uses Sanskrit *ātmabhāva* to name that conceit of embodiment, and we might presume that this Sanskrit underlies the more numerous mentions in the Chinese of **sarvajñatâtmabhāva* (薩芸若身). *Ātmabhāva,* however, does not in any case admit of the relatively figurative reading that would have -*kāya* mean "a collection of ~", but rather clearly refers to a single body like the physical body.

A further respect in which the ramifications of the present passage problematises Harrison's reading of *dharmakāya* in terms of "Mainstream" readings is that it envisages the Buddha as embodied primarily in his gnosis. Harrison is unaware of this possible reading of *dharmakāya,* and yet this is even a key dimension of the notion of *dharmakāya* in some of the sources to

[1504] Harrison, "Real Phantom Body" 56.

which he refers.[1505] If the Buddha's most veritable embodiment is in his gnosis, however, this too argues to some extent against Harrison's insistence on the plural reading of *dharma-* as it enters into the compound *dharmakāya*, even in places where the concept of *dharmakāya* is in fact, as he claims, congruent with a reading found in (some) of his Mainstream sources.

Thus, to summarise the implications of this passage in Lokakṣema's *Aṣṭa,* we have found (1) that the text mounts a model in which the gnosis of the Buddha, that is, *sarvajñatā* and *anuttarasaṃyaksaṃbodhi,* are explicilty and emphatically called a "body"; (2) that this is broadly consistent with the language of models of embodiment found in the Senavarma inscription and Sarvâstivāda scholasticism; and (3) that this model is presented in the context of an explicit polemic against the supremacy of relics (*śarīrāṇi,* "bodies") as an object of merit-making cultic practice, and an attempt to dethrone them from this pride of place and substitute for them *prajñāpāramitā* itself, both as gnosis and as text.[1506] I suggest that this provides us with a clear motive for the adoption of the corporeal conceit in speaking about the gnosis of the Buddha, a fact which other models of the history of Buddha-body doctrine has never been able to account for – the body of gnosis is proposed as a superior alternative to the body constituted by the relic, that cultic object *par excellence.*

That this model is already present in Lokakṣema, of course, presents us with a sticky problem of chronology. We do not know where it comes from. As we will see below, we already find, also in the same stratum of Chinese translation texts, a number of other ideas about embodiment which are clearly new, in comparison with the state in which embodiment doctrine stood at the

[1505] See the detailed arguments about embodiment in gnosis in the Sarvâstivāda, following Makransky in part, in Chapter 4.3 below.

[1506] We will see below that there is also reason, in some passages, to see *prajñāpāramitā* itself as another appellation for the Mahāyāna quasi-metaphysical "absolute".

close of the Pāli-canonical period and even in the scanty evidence provided by slightly later inscriptions. We therefore cannot know which, if any, of these various new doctrines of embodiment came first, or what kinds of logical and chronological relationships may have obtained among them to lead to the overall state of affairs we find even in this very earliest layer of the Chinese record. Even if readers find plausible my suggestion that the context of the polemic against the merit-making supremacy of relics provides us with a motivation for the adoption of "body" language here, therefore, we cannot by any means be sure that it was indeed prior, in terms either of chronology or developmental logic, to the various other concepts of Buddha bodies we find in this layer of the literature. For the moment, however, we can only note this difficulty, and postpone further discussion until we have all the various notions of embodiment in this layer of the literature before us.

We must also note, however, that the version of this passage that we find in Lokakṣema is anything but the end of the story. In the Sanskrit version of the text, the passage we have just examined is followed by another passage in which a novel and somewhat startling doctrine of embodiment is proposed, quite different from the Lokakṣema model. This latter passage is not found in Lokakṣema at all, and indeed, it appears nowhere in the Chinese record until Dānapāla's (Song) version of the text.[1507] In the course of the intervening eight centuries, the doctrines of embodiment found in this passage were to undergo quite some vicissitudes, which I will survey briefly before turning to the passage found only in the Dānapāla and Sanskrit versions of the text. As this brief survey will show, it seems that if this passage is any guide, doctrines of embodiment remained volatile and contested through a long period in the Prajñāpāramitā literature, and that it is a serious error to take the Sanskrit text as somehow indicative of "the" orthodox Prajñāpāramitā conception of the Buddha's embodiments.

[1507] Dānapāla was active from 982-1017; HBGR s.v. "Sego" 施護.

In Zhi Qian's version of the text, *sarvajñatā* is not explicitly called a body, as it is so emphatically in Lokakṣema; but it remains the case, nonetheless, that the problem of attaining Buddhahood is still cast in generally corporeal terms: "It is not by means of the (physical) body, i.e. *śarīra* (*ātmabhāvaśarīra*) that Buddhahood is attained; rather, the body of the Buddha is produced and attained from *sarvajñatā*."[1508] There is as yet no statement that the physical body is a result of skill in means. That the relics will still be worshipped after the Buddha's *parinirvāṇa* is blankly stated, but it is as difficult as it is in Lokakṣema to see the reason for this pronouncement.[1509]

A very close parallel to the present passage is also found in the *Pañcaviṃsatisāhasrikāprajñāpāramita;* the Sanskrit is in many respects almost identical to our extant *Aṣṭa* Sanskrit.[1510] In the version of this text translated by Mokṣala in 291, *sarvajñatā* is not spoken of as a body; but "this body" that the Buddha has obtained on its basis is specifically referred to as "the major and minor marks" (相好), a feature not found in any version of *Aṣṭa* and also not reflected in the extant *Pañca* Sanskrit.[1511] It also seems that the text there already supposes a different model of the relation between *sarvajñatā* and the Tathāgata's physical body (of marks), whereby the physical body is a "support" for *sarvajñatā* rather than being a product

[1508] 佛言。不用是身舍利得佛也。乃從一切智生得佛身, T225.484a17-18.

[1509] 我滅度後舍利供養如故, T225.484a18.

[1510] In particular, it includes the passage speaking of the Three Gems as relics, which we do not see until Dānapāla in the Chinese record, as we will see below. For the Sanskrit, see Kimura, *Pañca* II-III, 56-57.

[1511] The mention of marks here is part and parcel of a larger and more complex pattern of doctrines of the Buddha's embodiments in Mokṣala's text, which, however, will only be comprehensible in light of further textual facts we will lay out below in the section treating Mokṣala. See esp. p. 796 for further treatment of the idea of embodiment in the Mokṣala parallel to the passage under consideration here.

of it as with Lokakṣema.[1512] As we will see immediately below, this understanding is also found in *Aṣṭa* beginning with Kumārajīva.[1513]

Zhu Fonian's version of the text[1514] seems very closely based on Lokakṣema's, even using some of the same unusual transcription terms (e.g. 怛薩阿竭 for *tathāgata*). It comes as little surprise, therefore, that its treatment of the problematic of embodiment is almost identical to that found in Lokakṣema: it speaks just as emphatically of *sarvajñatā* as a body, and of the production or manifestation of a Buddha-body therefrom.

By Kumārajīva's version of the text, things are somewhat different from both the Lokakṣema model and from the model found in the Sanskrit text. The opening question is clearly, "By the practice of what path did the Tathāgata obtain the body *upon which sarvajñatā is based,* and attain *anuttarasaṃyaksaṃbodhi*?"[1515] In keeping with this formulation, *sarvajñatā* itself is not called a body even once; rather, the consistent position throughout is that the physical body (the only thing called a body at all) is the *support* (所依止) of *sarvajñatā.*[1516] This version of the text still does not claim that the physical body is mere skill in means.

[1512] I say "seems" because this analysis reads 屋室 as a translation of *āśraya,* a translation which, however, is somewhat unusual.

[1513] 如來無所著等正覺成薩云若。得此相好。從何所學得。釋提桓因白佛言。世尊。我聞如來無所著等正覺逮薩云若成相好。從般若波羅蜜中學得。佛言。如是如是。拘翼。不以是身數故名爲如來。逮得薩云若慧故成爲如來。是薩云若者從般若波羅蜜中出生。如是拘翼。如來所有身者是薩云若慧之屋室。如來因是室逮得薩云若。是故名爲薩云若慧之室, T221.46b05-13. I read 如來所有身者 as meaning merely "the body possessed by the Tathāgata" and not "all the bodies of the Tathāgata".

[1514] T226.514b20-26.

[1515] 如來行何道。得薩婆若所依止身。得阿耨多羅三藐三菩提, T227.542b22-23. Note that this is even clearer than the Sanskrit, which merely has *sarvajñatâtmabhāva* for Kumārajīva's 薩婆若所依止身.

[1516] 諸佛薩婆若從般若波羅蜜生。是身薩婆若智所依止故。如來因是身得薩婆若智。成阿耨多羅三藐三菩提。是身薩婆若所依止故。我滅度後舍利得供養, T227.542b26-c01. Of course, as we have

In Xuanzang's massive T220, we find several versions of this passage, all having in common certain further differences from all the versions of the text we have examined thus far. The question is consistenly what practice enabled the Tathāgata to attain omniscience and the *body of marks.*[1517] This body of marks is spoken of clearly as a support, as the physical body is in Kumārajīva, with further detail added.[1518] We still do not find the assertion that the Three Gems are "relics", but in its place, we find that a huge variety of things *are* all produced from *prajñāpāramitā*, including the four noble truths, various synonyms for the absolute (*dharmadhātu, dharmatā,* Thusness etc.), a long list of types of emptiness etc.[1519]

Thus, a survey of the Chinese versions of the text prior to Dānapāla show that not just one but several alternate models of the Buddha's genuine embodiment were opposed to relics. These range from the models found in Kumārajīva and Xuanzang, which downplay the corporeality of this alternative the most (speaking only of *sarvajñatā* as "supported" by the physical body, but never calling it a body in its own right); through the middle ground of Zhi Qian's version, which speaks of the attainment of Buddhahood as the attainment of a Buddha body; to the most emphatically corporeal version found in Lokakṣema and Zhu Fonian's apparently closely

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already noted, this idea is found in the second part of the Sanskrit text, to which none of our Chinese texts thus far has any analogue.

1517 如來所得一切智智及相好身。於何等法修學而得, T220 (Vol. 5), 570c26-27.

1518 佛相好身但爲依處。若不依止佛相好身。一切智智無由而轉, T220 (Vol. 5),571a07-08.

1519 T220 (Vol. 5), 571b10-572a11. The text contains at least five variants on this passage, but in no version of the passage that I could find is the "Three Gems as relics" passage and conceit present. The entire passage, including those portions noted already, is repeated verbatim, with some abbreviations, at T220 (Vol. 6), 552a24-553a08. See also a variant version at T220 (Vol. 6),152a16-c22, where the list of things produced from *prajñāpāramitā* differs, but is still prolix, and does not include the *triratna* as relics. Another version of the same text is found at T220 (Vol. 6), 774c14-775a28, but does not seem to contain any equivalent to the assertions about *prabhāvanā* at all. The same is true of the rather short version found at T220 (Vol. 6), 873b21-c15.

affiliated text. Clearly, this notion of the corporeal conditions and concomitants of the attainment of Buddhahood was a site of considerable ferment throughout a long period of the history of this literature. This means, first, that it is, at least in this case, meaningless to speak of "the" Prajñāpāramitā doctrine of embodiment; and second, that for this literature at least, the elaboration of *trikāya* doctrine in the works of "Maitreya" and Asaṇga was certainly no teleological endpoint that resolved all difficulties, but apparently, merely a passing and perhaps only marginally relevant episode.

This same pattern of ferment is evidenced further, in a striking manner, when we turn to the passage that follows the passage examined above in the Sanskrit text, which, as I already mentioned above, is not attested in the Chinese record prior to Dānapāla.[1520] The key features of this version of the text are: (1) it states explicitly, against all the other texts, that the physical body is a result of skill in means, as we already saw above; (2) it speaks of the physical body as a "support" or "ground" (*āśraya*) for the realisation of *sarvajñatā,* and explicitly uses this fact to explain the continued worship of the relics of the Buddha after his *parinirvāṇa*; and, most importantly, (3) it also speaks, most unusually, of the Three Gems, i.e. Buddha, Dharma and Saṃgha, as "relics" (*sarīra*), and states that they, too, derive their power from the "basis" of the physical body of the Buddha.

The text, we recall (see above p. 694), had just finished saying that the (physical) body i.e. *śarīra* (*ātmabhāvaśarīra*) of the Tathāgata is the result of skill in means of the perfection of wisdom,

[1520] The Dānapāla version of the passage as a whole is found at T228.595b27-596a28. That the equivalent to the Sanskrit text takes this long to appear in the Chinese record must surely give us pause, because one of its possible lessons is that in some cases the versions of texts that have come down to us in our extant Sanskrit versions may have still been undergoing modification quite late. I am aware, however, that it is also possible that there might be more than one lineage in the text's history.

and that it serves as a foundation (*āśraya*) for the [special] knowledge comprised by omniscience. It goes on:

> " . . . and that [i.e. *ātmabhāvaśarīra,* as a result of *prajñāpāramitôpāyakauśalya*] becomes a support (*āśraya*)[1521] for the [special] knowledge comprised by omniscience (*sarvajñajñāna*). The generation of (*prabhāvanā bhavati*)[1522] the [special] knowledge comprised by omniscience (*sarvajñajñāna*) depends on this support (*enaṁ āśrayaṁ niśritya*); so too the generation of the Buddha-relic/body (*buddhaśarīra*),[1523] the generation of the Dharma-relic/body (*dharmaśarīra*), and the generation of the Samgha-relic/body (*saṁghaśarīra*).[1524] The acquisition of the (physical) body i.e. *śarīra* is thus the

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[1521] Conze adds to this sentence that the physical body is an *āśraya* for the [acquisition of the] cognition of the all-knowing [by others]", but in light of the general significance of the term *āśraya* in discourse about the bodily conditions and concomitants of enlightenment, I am not so sure this interpretation is correct, and might not be an inaccurate attempt to rationalise the text in accordance with a view it does not in fact propound. See below, p. 708. On *āśraya,* see Chapter 5.2 of this dissertation below on *āśrayaparāvṛtti.* Note that the inclusion of the term *āśraya* in reference to the physical body (*ātmabhāvaśarīra*) of the Buddha here would either make this passage a remarkable, chronologically anomalous precedent for the notion of *āśrayaparāvṛtti,* or, much more likely, shows that the present passage indicates an influence of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* and the related understanding of *āśraya* on the Prajñāpāramitā literature. The fact that the concept gets woven into discourse about bodies here thus provides a additional confirmation of my contention below that *āśrayaparāvṛtti* is properly to be understood in the context of ideas about embodiments, and also is another instance of the way that the Prajñāpāramitā corpus was open to the incorporation of new concepts over a long period of time.

[1522] Conze inexplicably translates this word "revelation". I have chosen the translation "generation" here because of the way it nicely combines, in modern usage, implications of bringing something into being (production) and the creation of "power" (in the case of electricity!). On the related p.p.p. form *prabhāvita,* see Harrison, "Real Phantom Body" 81 n. 50, and references listed there, esp. Schmithausen, "Nirvāṇa Abschnitt" 109-111. According to Harrison, the semantic range of the word includes "produced", "manifested", "recognised", "characterised" and "distinguished"; Schmithausen suggests "constituted by" (*konstituiert durch*) to cover as much as possible of this range. However, we might further note that *pra/bhāv,* causative of *pra/bhū,* in means in ordinary Skt. "to cause to thrive or prosper, to endow, to confer with power" etc., and thus that the word as it is used in this context may come close to the concept of *adhi/ṣṭhā* (*adhiṣṭhāna* etc.), meaning, roughly, to infuse with spiritual power. We should note further that the semantics of this word in the present seem quite close to the semantics of *pari/bhāv* as it is interpreted by Schopen in connection with the relics (which I translate as "quicken" in this study, to recall Schopen's reading), from which it differs, of course, only by a prefix, and on the relation to which the passage may be punning. I am unsure, however, whether this is truly basis enough to propose a link between the language used here and the rhetoric of the "quickening" of physical relics. Note, though, that relics are spoken of as "quickened" by *sarvajñatā* at Vaidya 50.24-25, Conze 118 (here Conze translates "pervaded"): *prajñāpāramitāparibhāvitā sarvajñatā, sarvajñatānirjātā ca tathāgataśarīrāṇāṁ pūjā bhavati.*

[1523] I have changed Conze's "body" for *śarīra* here for "relic". Conze's translation merely dodges the problem of the Three Gems all being called alike "relics", and is in any case meaningless, since he gives no clue what it might mean to speak of a "body of the Saṃgha" either, and he gives the very erroneous impression that we are dealing with the much more usual terms *buddhakāya, dharmakāya.*

[1524] Dānapāla in fact varies slightly even from our Sanskrit version of the text, in that the key sentence speaking of the Three Gems as relics states that the Tathāgata's (physical) body is produced from the skill in means of *prajñāpāramitā; sarvajñajñāna* (一切智智) is attained on the basis of this body; and then these

cause (-*hetuka*) of the [special] knowledge comprised by omniscience. As the support of that [special] knowledge it has, for all beings, become a true shrine (*caityabhūto . . . bhavati*),[1525] worthy of being saluted respectfully, of being honoured, revered and adored. After I have gone to Parinirvāṇa, my relics (*śarīrāṇi*) also will be worshipped (*mama parinirvṛtasyāpi sataḥ eṣāṁ śarīrāṇāṁ pūjā bhaviṣyati*). It is for this reason that the person who would copy and worship the perfection of wisdom would beget the greater merit. For, in doing so, he would worship the [special] knowledge comprised by omniscience."[1526]

As I see it, two moves are made here simultaneously to undermine the claim of relics to pride of place as the object of the most effective merit-making cultic activity, and to replace them with the *prajñāpāramitā* (as text, but also as transcendent knowledge).

First, the very rubric of *śarīra* is broadened to include not only its most usual sense of the physical remnants of the Buddha's last physical body (which I take it is what is meant here by *buddhaśarīra*), but also the Dharma and even the Saṃgha; that is, all of the Three Gems (*triratna*) are "relics". As I suggested in Section 3.2.2 of this dissertation,[1527] this is, to some extent, a logical move and one that has canonical precedents on both fronts. On the other hand, the move, we take it, was not particularly successful historically, at least in its application to the

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three kinds of "relic" (merely 身 "body" in Dānapāla's Chinese) are obtained on the basis of *sarvajñajñāna* <u>in turn</u>: 復從般若波羅蜜多善巧方便生如來身。是故此身與一切智智而爲依止。由一切智智爲所依故即得佛身即得法身得僧伽身 T228.596a17-20.

[1525] Recall that this locution, as found most typically in the formula *sa pravṛtipradeśaś ca caityabhūto bhavet* ("that very spot of earth shall become a true shrine"), is shown by Schopen in the article of the same name to be a central component of the cult of the book when applied to (Mahāyāna) texts.

[1526] Conze 106, translation modified: *. . . sarvajñajñānāśrayabhūto bhavati. enaṁ hy āśrayaṁ niśritya sarvajñajñānasya prabhāvanā bhavati, buddhaśarīraprabhāvanā bhavati, dharmaśarīraprabhāvanā bhavati, saṁghaśarīraprabhāvanā bhavati. ity evaṁ sarvajñajñāna-hetuko 'yam ātmabhāva-śarīra-pratilambhaḥ sarvajñajñānâśraya-bhūtatvāt sarvasattvānāṁ caityabhūto vandanīyaḥ satkaraṇīyo gurukaraṇīyo mānanīyaḥ pūjanīyo'rcanīyo'pacāyanīyaḥ saṁvṛtto bhavati. evaṁ ca mama parinirvṛtasyāpi sataḥ eṣāṁ śarīrāṇāṁ pūjā bhaviṣyati. tasmāt tarhi kauśika yaḥ kaścit kulaputro vā kuladuhitā vā imāṁ prajñāpāramitāṁ likhitvā pustakagatāṁ vā kṛtvā sthāpayet, enāṁ ca divyābhiḥ puṣpadhūpagandhamālyavilepanacūrṇacīvaracchatradhvajaghaṇṭāpatākābhiḥ satkuryāt gurukuryāt mānayet pūjayet arcayet apacāyet, ayam eva kauśika tayoḥ kulaputrayoḥ kuladuhitror vā bahutaraṁ puṇyaṁ prasavet. tat kasya hetoḥ. sarvajñajñānasya hi kauśika tena kulaputreṇa vā kuladuhitrā vā pūjā kṛtā bhaviṣyati . . .* Vaidya 29.14-23.

[1527] See above, esp. p. 360.

Saṃgha (given the rarity of this category and claim). Nonetheless, we can certainly see the strategy the text here adopts as a potentially powerful one in reframing the worship of physical Buddha-relics as merely one class among several of relics.

Second, however, the claim is made that all forms of relics, and in addition, omniscience itself, that *sine qua non* of Buddhahood, are *dependent upon* the physical body – the self-same physical body that the text has just explained is merely a result of skill in means in *prajñāpāramitā.* That is to say, relics of these various kinds are doubly derivative in comparison to the *prajñāpāramitā* itself – at one remove because skill in means is an indirect application of *prajñāpāramitā* in the first place; and at two removes because it is only on the basis of a body that results from such skill in means that the relics are enlivened at all. (By contrast, *sarvajñatā,* even though it also has a basis in that same body, has also already been said to be a direct product of *prajñāpāramitā* itself: "This omniscience of the Tathāgata has come forth from the perfection of wisdom [*prajñāpāramitānirjāta*].")

A possible third respect in which the cult of relics is undermined here is that the rhetoric of "quickening" may be echoed, and appropriated, by the talk of "generation" (*prabhāvanā*) of the Three Gems as relics, which may recall to mind the "quickening" (**paribhāvanā*) of physical relics by the five pure aggregates.[1528]

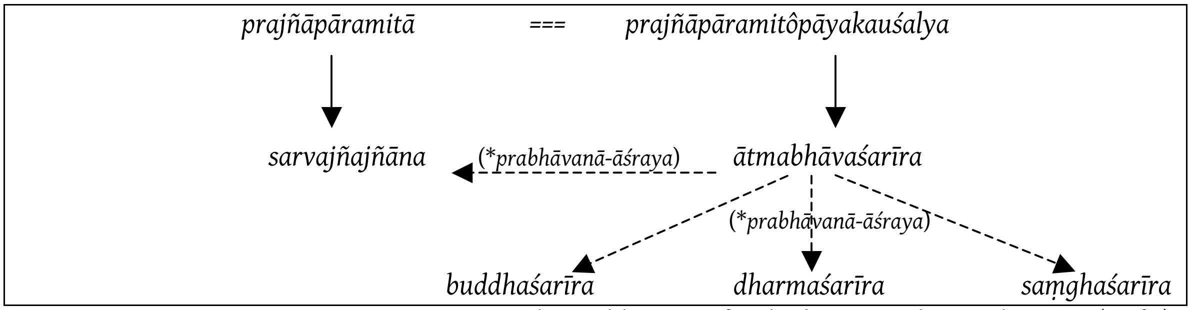
A final, perhaps somewhat incidental problem raised by this reading of the use of the term *prabhāvanā* here is that of what can be meant by the sentence, "After my *parinirvāṇa,* my relics will be worshipped as before" in the Lokakṣema version of the text. In the Sanskrit version, as we have seen here, the implication seems clearly to be that the relics (here meaning only the

[1528] I have already suggested this above, n. 1522.

buddhaśarīra, i.e. the physical relics remaining from the Buddha's actual body) continue to be worshipped after the Buddha's death because they are still that same physical matter that served as a basis for the quickening of those various things, and therefore, they are still a "true shrine" (*caityabhūta*). In the case of the Lokakṣema, however, this entire notion is absent, and the relics, as with the *ātmabhāvaśarīra* they derive from, are left out on an explanatory limb, entirely disconnected from the wonderful visions of salvifically relevant modes of embodiment the text sets out to describe.[1529] It is possible that this seemingly incidental problem might have some significance, however, if we are justified in speculating that the failure of the Lokakṣema version of the text to account for the status and place of the *ātmabhāvaśarīra* may have been one pressure that led to the further evolution of the model of embodiment the text proposes, leading to the later version we have seen in the Sanskrit text. At the same time, we might also suspect that the Lokakṣema version of the text still implicitly assumes a model of the Buddha's ordinary body whereby it is merely an ordinary physical body, "grain-fed, born of father and mother" etc., and has no role in the Buddha's enlightenment (the "body in which he becomes a Buddha" is comprised rather of omniscience itself), such that after the enlightenment, it is a mere vestigial excrescence or encumberance, almost irrelevant. Certainly, there seems to be no sign of a docetistic doctrine of the visible worldly body, which we might, by contrast, see in the Sanskrit text's assertion that the *ātmabhāvaśarīra* is a "product of skill in means".

On the basis of this discussion, then, we can extend the diagram given above (p. 695) to summarise the relations among the various aspects of the problematic of embodiment as discussed by the Sanskrit version of the text, thus:

[1529] See n. 1493, 1502.



The problematic of embodiment in the Sanskrit *Aṣṭa* (2 of 2)

Now, as I mentioned above, this second half of the Sanskrit version of the passage is entirely unparalleled in the Lokakṣema version and indeed every Chinese version of the text prior to Dānapāla. We have already noted that in one sense, that is, by its emphasis on the status of **sarvajñatā* as a kind of body, the Lokakṣema version of the text propounds a model that is more strongly corporeal than later versions. By contrast, in this version of the text, we see a different emphasis on corporeality in two directions not pursued by Lokakṣema: (1) the new strategy of broadening the category of "relic" to include Dharma and even the Saṃgha; and (2) the claim that the Buddha's special, final *physical* body was the a necessary precondition ("ground", *āśraya*) for the functional validity (*prabhavanā*) not only of these relics, but also of *sarvajñajñāna* itself. Viewed in this light, it is almost as if this strategy in the later versions of the texts is an attempt to recuperate the strong sense of corporeality emphasised in the earlier version, which had been lost when the nature of *sarvajñatā* as a body was de-emphasised. It seems that the notion that the enlightenment of the Buddha had corporeal concomintants or conditions was too important to lose entirely as the text(s) evolved; and that what happened, rather, was that the specific *mode*(*s*) of embodiment envisaged was rather subject to continual rethinking and negotiation.

To summarise the findings of this section, we find in all versions of *Aṣṭa* a vigorous polemic designed to show that *prajñāpāramitā,* as both gnosis and text, is far superior as a cultic object to the relics of the Buddha. In the context of this polemic, we find not just one but a range of

alternative visions of the most authentic embodiment of the Buddha proposed. By tracing the continual transformation of this passage through nearly a thousand years of the Chinese textual record, we were able to see that the specific alternative visions proposed were far from stable, but a common thread running through all of them held that (1) the Buddha's gnosis was far more essential to his being as a Buddha than his physical being; and, conversely, that (2) it is nonetheless important that this gnosis is understood as embodied, or rooted in some corporeal state. We have also seen that the specific version of the passage found at the very earliest stage of the Chinese record, that is, in Lokakṣema, envisages the Buddha's awakening and gnosis, in the guise of *anuttarasaṃyaksambodhi* and **sarvajñatā,* in the most explicitly corporeal terms of all the versions of the text available to us in Sanskrit or Chinese: omniscience, here, is consistently presented as a kind of *body,* i.e. a **sarvajñatâtmabhāva.* We have also seen, further, that this understanding of the Buddha as embodied in his *bodhi* and his kinds of gnosis is consistent with the prototypical understanding we observed in the Senavarma Inscription, where a nascent version of it seemed to be associated with relics, and also with the more formalised understanding of the *dharmakāya* found in Sarvâstivāda scholasticism as represented by the **Mahāvibhāṣā* and the *Abhidharmakośa.*

This single *Aṣṭa* passage thus has several implications for our overall narrative of development of ideas about Buddha bodies. First, given the context of the elaboration of this model of embodiment as part of the polemic against relics as the most merit-making of cultic objects, it seems plausible that the elaboration of these models was motivated at least in part by the intention to substitute other modes or understandings of the Buddha's embodiment for the "bodies" constituted by relics. Second, it seems clear that ideas about the embodiment of the Buddha not in keeping with anything found in earlier sources (other than the Senavarma Inscription, if my reading of it is correct!) are already present at this stage of the Chinese

record. Third, it seems, more specifically, that we have no objective grounds for assigning chronological priority to the Sarvâstivāda as the originators of the doctrine of embodiment of the Buddha we find in their texts, unless in the relatively trivial senses that they use the term *dharmakāya* for it, and that they identify the particular kinds of *jñāna* most essentially comprising *bodhi* differently (i.e. as *kṣayajñāna* and *anutpādajñāna*). This last point is of broad methodological importance, since it serves as a signal example of the more general principle adopted in this study that we very frequently have no objective grounds for assuming the priority of the doctrines ascribed to or found in the texts of the Mainstream "schools" to Mahāyāna doctrines.

We will have occasion to return to these points below, when we consider the larger patterns of development in ideas of embodiment attested to by these texts. Meanwhile, we need to consider other passages that continue the polemic against relics, in which the problematic of embodiment is further developed.

4.3.3 Relics as products of *sarvajñatā* in Lokakṣema's *Aṣṭa*

The polemic against relics as supreme objects of cultic merit-making activity is continued in Chapter 4 of the extant Sanskrit text (equivalent material to which is still part of Chapter 3 in Lokakṣema). In Conze's translation, the Buddha asks,

> "If, Kausika, on the one hand you were given this Jambudvīpa filled up to the top with relics of the Tathāgatas; and if, on the other hand, you could share in a written copy of this perfection of wisdom, and if now you had to choose between the two, which one would you take?"[1530]

Unsurprisingly, Śakra answers that he would take the perfection of wisdom. He explains that it is not because he thinks the relics lack value, but rather, because the relics are derivative from

[1530] Conze 116, Vaidya 48.2-5: *sa cet kauśika ayaṁ te jambūdvīpaḥ paripūrṇaś cūlikābaddhas tathāgataśarīrāṇāṁ dīyeta, iyaṁ ca prajñāpāramitā likhitvopanāmyeta, tata ekatareṇa bhāgena pravāryamāṇo 'nayor dvayor bhāgayoḥ sthāpitayoḥ katamaṁ tvaṁ kauśika bhāgaṁ gṛhṇīyāḥ.*

the true substance of the Tathāgata, and therefore secondary in value. By contrast, *prajñāpāramitā* is of the very essence of the Buddhas, and therefore of much higher value.

As has already been observed in the previous literature on the bodies of the Buddha, this passage is the context, in the extant Sanskrit, for one of five mentions of the *dharmakāya*; as previous scholars have also noted, the *dharmakāya* is not mentioned in the corresponding part of Lokakṣema's text. The relevant part of the Sanskrit text explains the relative merit of *prajñāpāramitā,* and the reasons for it, thus:[1531]

> "[I would choose] this *prajñāpāramitā,* and no other, because of my esteem for the Tathāgata, the Guide; because *this,* indeed, is the Tathāgata's 'body/relic' (*śarīra*!) in the true sense of the word.[1532] Indeed, the Bhagavan has said:[1533]
>
> > "'The Buddhas, the Bhagavans, have *dharma* for their body (*dharmakāyā buddhā bhagavantaḥ*). Do not think that this *satkāya*[1534] is [my] body (*kāya*). You should see me by means of the consummation of the body of *dharma* (*dharmakāyapariniṣpattitas*).'[1535]
>
> "But that Tathāgata-body (*tathāgatakāya*) should be seen as comprised of (*prabhāvita*[1536]) the limit of existence (*bhūtakoṭi*), that is, by *prajñāpāramitā.* It is not the case, O Lord, that there is some failure of respect on my part towards the relics of the Tathāgata; on the contrary, I have real respect for them.[1537] But it rather that the relics of the Tathāgata receive worship as [things] produced from this *prajñāpāramitā,* and therefore, O Bhagavan, by precisely the this [same] worship of *prajñāpāramitā,* complete and full

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[1531] Vaidya 48.7-15; Conze 116.

[1532] *etad dhi tathāgatānāṁ bhūtārthikaṁ śarīram,* Vaidya 48.8.

[1533] See below, p. 724, for reasons to doubt that this apparent "quotation" from a Mainstream text really reflects, as Paul Harrison seems to believe, a Mainstream understanding, or a genuine Mainstream warrant for the notion of *dharmakāya.*

[1534] This, of course, recalls the whole discourse of *satkāyadṛṣṭi,* which we examined in §2.1.1.3 above.

[1535] *dharmakāyā buddhā bhagavantaḥ. mā khalu punar imaṁ bhikṣavaḥ sat-kāyaṁ kāyaṁ manyadhvam. dharmakāyapariniṣpattito māṁ bhikṣavo drakṣyatha,* Vaidya 48.9-10.

[1536] On *pra/bhū,* see n. 1522.

[1537] *na khalu punar me bhagavaṁs teṣu tathāgata-śarīreṣv agauravam. gauravam eva me bhagavaṁs teṣu tathāgata-śarīreṣu,* Vaidya 48.11-12.

worship of those relics of the Tathāgata is also accomplished, because of the fact that the relics of the Tathāgata are produced from *prajñāpāramitā*."[1538]

Here, we see the body-term *śarīra* in the precise context of a polemic against the value of relics as supreme cultic objects. Conjoined to this polemic is the advancement of a concept of *dharmakāya* that seems transparently interpolated into the *Vakkali-sutta* notion that "He who sees the *dharma* sees me" etc. In light of these features of the passage, it is simply incredible that no scholar has commented on the polyvalence of the term *śarīra* here, or seen any relevance in it to the elaboration of the notion of a "Dharma *body*". And yet, if we look at this remarkable passage closely, we see that (1) the *prajñāpāramitā* is said not just to be the true *kāya* ("body") of the Tathāgata, but his true *śarīra* ("body/relic"), both very close in the same context; (2) the *dharmakāya* is also identified, via the intermediate term of the *bhūtakoṭi* ("limit of existence"), with the self-same *prajñāpāramitā*; (3) that the implicit claim is therefore that the *dharmakāya* itself is the "relic" (*śarīra*) of the Buddha "in the real sense of the word" (*bhūtârthikam*); (4) that this notion of the Buddha's most veritable embodiment is elaborated in the context of precisely the same logic for the privileging of *prajñāpāramitā* over the relics that we saw operative in the previous passage, that is, *prajñāpāramitā* is of the essence of Buddhahood, whereas relics are derivative at some remove – a parallel which strengthens the relation we already observed between the nascent *dharmakāya* and Lokakṣema's strongly corporeal rendering of *sarvajñatā*.

Much of this was yet to come at the phase of doctrinal evolution represented by the dawn of our Chinese record, however. In Lokakṣema's version of the text, only a very brief passage corresponds to any of the Sanskrit we have just examined. Despite the wide discrepancies between the two versions of the text, however, I believe it is possible to show that even in

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[1538] *api tu khalu punar bhagavan itaḥ prajñāpāramitāto nirjātāni tathāgata-śarīrāṇi pūjāṁ labhante. tasmāt tarhi bhagavan anayaiva prajñāpāramitayā pūjitayā teṣām api tathāgata-śarīrāṇāṁ paripūrṇā pūjā kṛtā bhavati. tatkasya hetoḥ. prajñāpāramitānirjātattvāt tathāgataśarīrāṇām,* Vaidya 48.12-15.

Lokakṣema's version, the text here continues to elaborate a vision of the Buddha's embodiments that moves significantly beyond anything we have seen in the Pāli materials, and which moreover we must recognise as essentially a(n early) Mahāyāna understanding.

In Lokakṣema's version of the text, Śakra first replies to the Buddha's question thus:

> "I would choose this *prajñāpāramitā;* [but] it is not that I presume to disrespect relics. O Lord among Lords, it is as issued from [*prajñāpāramitā*] that relics are worshipped; relics are worthy of worship [because] they issue from *prajñāpāramitā*."[1539]

The fact that most of the Sanskrit passage above, and most particularly the term *dharmakāya* itself, is absent from Lokakṣema's Chinese has led previous scholars to think that "there is" no concept of the *dharmakāya* here, at the phase of the text's evolution represented by the Lokakṣema version of the text. And yet, to stop at this observation is to ignore the fact that in this very context, important ideas about embodiment actually are to be found, if, once more, we broaden our purview beyond the *term dharmakāya* itself to language about embodiments of some form or another.

Immediately after the passage just examined, the text, in both Lokakṣema's version and the Sanskrit, goes into an analogy between the relics of the Buddha and Indra's throne in the hall of the Gods: Indra's throne is reverenced even when he is *absent* from it,[1540] because it is the site

[1539] 釋提桓因言。寧取般若波羅蜜。何以故。我不敢不敬舍利。天中天。從中出舍利供養。般若波羅蜜中出舍利從中得供養, T224.435c03-05. The text is difficult to follow in some of its details here, and is perhaps somewhat corrupt.

[1540] Note that, by implication, the conceit of the Buddha's presence in relics is here undermined, which is surely a part of the overall strategy of the text to devalue relics in favour of *prajñāpāramitā*. In Lokakṣema's Chinese text only, the relics are even further devalued by implication below when the way in which they derive their venerability from *prajñāpāramitā* is compared in a derogatory manner to the safety a debtor might enjoy if he was friends with a king and regularly associated with him; it is because of the power of his associate the king, and not his own might or worth, that he would escape censure and have nothing to fear: 譬如負債人。天中天。與王相隨出入。王甚敬重之。無有問者亦無所畏。何以故。在王邊有威力故。天中天。從般若波羅蜜中出舍利。從中出供養。是經天中天如王。般若波羅蜜。譬如是王雄猛得供養。怛薩阿竭舍利從薩芸若中出生得供養。如是天中天。薩芸若怛薩阿竭阿羅呵三耶三佛從般若波羅蜜中出生, T224.435c17-24.

where he teaches the Dharma to the Gods of the Thirty-Three. Turning first to the Sanskrit text, the analogy is extended to the relation between the relics of the Buddha and what is really worthy of respect in his being as follows, in an explanation that also justifies the preference for *prajñāpāramitā* over the relics in terms somewhat redundant with the passage just examined:

> "In the same way, the perfection of wisdom is the real eminent cause and condition which sustains (*āhārikā*) the omniscience (*sarvajñatā*) of the Tathāgata. The relics of the Tathāgata, on the other hand, are in fact[1541] supports (*āśrayabhūta*)[1542] of omniscience, but they are not in fact conditions or causes (*na pratyayabhūtāni, na kāraṇabhūtāni*) for the production of that special knowledge. As the cause of the special knowledge of omnisence the perfection of wisdom is also worshipped in the relics of the Tathāgata. For this reason, of the two lots mentioned before, I would choose . . ."[1543]

Of course, the logic at work here echoes the logic we have already seen employed above to argue for the superiority of *prajñāpāramitā* to the relics in Chapter 3 of the Sanskrit text, and indeed, we might read this passage as an extension of that logic: relics are worshipped because of their derivative association with *prajñāpāramitā,* and not in any intrinsic worth of their own; the "body" (*śarīra*) comprised by the relics is a mere "support" (*āśraya*) for *sarvajñatā,* not its real cause or condition;[1544] by contrast, *prajñāpāramitā* itself is the direct and principal *cause* of omniscience, and is therefore worthy of much greater reverence.

Given that, as we saw above, the logic of relations among *sarvajñatā, prajñāpāramitā* and the physical body are understood differently in Lokakṣema's version of the text, we would be right

[1541] Recall Schopen's arguments about the use of *-bhūta* to mean "a true", etc.

[1542] Here Conze inconsistently translates "true *deposits*" for *āśraya,* where, in the passages examined above, he rather translates it "sure foundation", 106.

[1543] Conze 116, heavily modified. *evam eva bhagavan maheśākhya-hetu-pratyaya-bhūtā prajñāpāramitā. tathāgatasyārhataḥ samyaksaṁbuddhasya sarvajñatāyā āhārikā. sarvajñatāyāś ca tathāgataśarīrāṇy āśrayabhūtāni. na tu tāni pratyayabhūtāni, na kāraṇabhūtāni jñānasyotpādāya. evam eva bhagavan sarvajñajñānahetukā tathāgataśarīreṣu pūjā kṛtā bhavati. tasmāt tarhi bhagavan anayor dvayor bhāgayoḥ sthāpitayor . . .* Vaidya 48.19-23.

[1544] Conze's translation of *āśraya* as "deposit" here, which I have criticised above n. 1542, completely obscures the fact that what is at stake here is a *causal* relationship with *sarvajñatā*.

to expect the Lokakṣema to differ somewhat in its version of this passage. In Lokakṣema, too, however, the present passage functions as an extension of the logic of embodiment already elaborated in passages examined above. It reads:

> "In the same way [as with the worship of Indra's throne in his absence,] O God among Gods, the relics (舍利, *śarīra*) of the Tathāgata, the Arhat, the Saṃyaksaṃbuddha, [which are] produced (出) by *prajñāpāramitā,* are a body (身, **śarīra*? **kāya*? **ātmabhāva*?) produced from (從中出生) the special knowledge of *sarvajña*[*tā*] (*sarvajñajñāna*).[1545] For this reason, O God among Gods, of these two options, I would choose *prajñāpāramitā . . .*"[1546]

It is of interest for our present purposes that relics are explicitly and separately referred to by the word "body" (*shen* 身) here. This detail is paralleled in the Zhi Qian version of the text, which moreover renders the reading of the Lokakṣema more secure against certain potential ambiguities that might arise if Lokakṣema alone were all we had.[1547] This point is of interest, first, because it is obviously an incidental confirmation of the thesis I argued in §4.1, that relics were understood as a body of the Buddha, and further, it shows that this understanding is

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[1545] This reading, and the repunctuation of the Taishō upon which it is based, is supported by the close parallel with Zhi Qian's version of the text, which reads: "The *śarīra/-āṇi* of the Tathāgata, the Arhat, the Saṃyaksaṃbuddha, which is/are produced by *prajñāpāramitā,* is/are a body produced from *sarvajñatā*", 明度出如來無所著正真道最正覺之舍利。一切智從中生身, 225.485b14-15. Compare also the Fonian version, which the Taishō likewise punctuates to reflect the same understanding, and reads: "Thus it is also with the products of *prajñāpāramitā,* O God among Gods; the relics of the Tathāgata-Arhat-Saṃyaksaṃbuddha, which [they] produce, are produced from *sarvajñajñāna*" 般若波羅蜜出者是如天中天。出怛薩阿竭阿羅訶三耶三佛舍利。爲從薩芸若智慧出生, T226.517b23-25. That the intent of each sentence should be the same is further supported by the fact that the Zhi Qian and Fonian versions of the text generally reads in this passage like an alternate translation of the same underlying text. This reading is also supported by the paraphrase within Lokakṣema's text below, 怛薩阿竭舍利從薩芸若中出生得供養, T224.435c22. 中出生, 從中出生 is clearly translationese for *nir/jā* (which is the verb we see in this context in Sanskrit), and on the basis of comparison with the extant Sanskrit, this latter sentence could almost be reconstructed in Sanskrit thus: **tāni tathāgataśarīrāṇi sarvajñatāto nirjātāni pūjāṁ labhante.* We would thus read 般若波羅蜜出怛薩阿竭阿羅呵三耶三佛舍利、薩芸若之智慧從中出生身 for something like **prajñāpāramitā-*[*nir-*]*jātāni tathāgatasya arhataḥ saṃyaksaṃbuddhasya śarīrāṇi sarvajñajñānato nirjāto ātmabhāvo*(?) [*bhavati*].

[1546] 如是天中天。般若波羅蜜出怛薩阿竭阿羅呵三耶三佛舍利[。]薩芸若之智慧從中出生身。用是故。天中天。兩分之中取般若波羅蜜, T224.435c10-13.

[1547] See n. 1545.

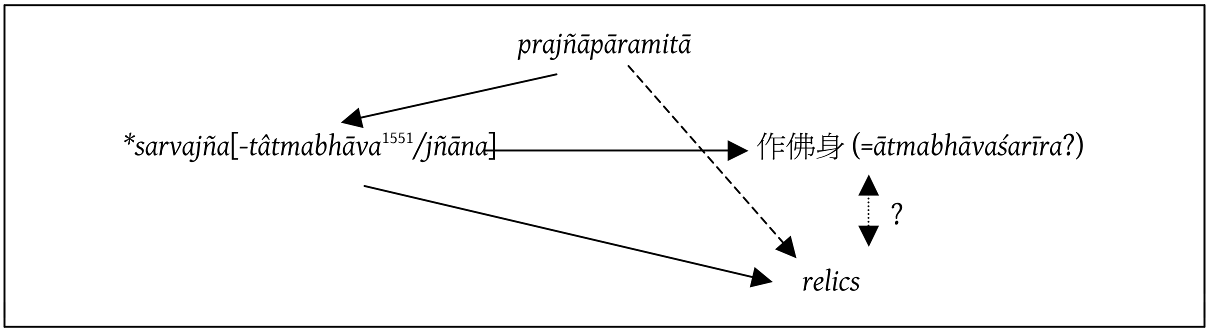
indeed operative here, in the context of the *Aṣṭa*'s polemic against the supremacy of relics as objects of merit-making cultic activity.

Also of special interest is the fact that this passage clearly asserts that relics are produced from *sarvajñatā*. This is, of course, the opposite causal relation to the one posited by the Sanskrit,[1548] where *sarvajñatā* depends upon the physical body as a "support" (*āśraya*).[1549] In asserting this relation, however, the passage clarifies a problem that remained obscure in passages corresponding to Skt. Ch. 3, examined in §4.3.2 above – the relation of the relics to the other forms of embodiment for the Buddha posited by the text. We have already seen there that for the Lokakṣema version of the text, *sarvajñatā* is clearly and emphatically a "body", and moreover that this body is said to produce *anuttarasaṃyaksaṃbodhi* and the "body in which [the Buddha] becomes a Buddha". With this new piece of information, that relics are produced also produced from *sarvajñatā*[-*jñāna*], we can add further to the diagram of the structure of the Buddha's embodiment according to Lokakṣema's text, as follows:[1550]

[1548] Our present main focus is not on the Sanskrit text, but it is worth noting that elsewhere, the Sanskrit also presents a different vision of the relation between relics, *prajñāpāramitā,* and *sarvajatā*: "*Sarvajñatā* is quickened (*paribhāvita*) by *prajñāpāramitā,* and it is as produced from *sarvajñatā* that relics come to be worshipped;" *prajñāpāramitāparibhāvitā sarvajñatā, sarvajñatānirjātā ca tathāgataśarīrāṇāṁ pūjā bhavati,*Vaidya 50.24-25, my translation.

[1549] The only alternative to this conclusion is to find a way to construe the Chinese so that it says the same thing as the Sanskrit. I can see no way this could be done. We might try to read 舍利薩芸若之智慧從中出生身 to mean something like (a) "the relic-body (*śarīra/-āṇi*) produces the body of *sarvajñatājñāna*", or even (b) "the relics are a body that produces *sarvajñatājñāna* (in this latter case understanding "body" to refer loosely to a notion corresponding to Skt. *āśraya,* admittedly an interesting possibility for extrinsic reasons); but this would require that we hypothesise quite severe corruption in the Chinese text, reading as if it gave rather (a) 舍利從中出生薩芸若之智慧身, **śarīrato nirjātaḥ sarvajñatâtmabhāvaḥ,* or (b) **śarīrato nirjātaḥ sarvajñajñāna ātmabhāvataḥ*(?!). Both of these alternatives seem to take us too far from what the text actually shows, and to ignore readings which, however counterintuitive in terms of their content, are philologically and syntactically closer to hand.

[1550] Compare p. 696.



The problematic of embodiment in Lokakṣema's *Aṣṭa,* 2

As this diagram shows, this new passage not only shows us that relics, as well as *anuttarasaṃyaksaṃbodhi* and "the body in which [the Buddha] becomes a Buddha" (作佛身) are produced from *sarvajñatā*.

In conjunction with the passage already examined in §4.3.2 above, this passage allows us to go significantly beyond anything that has been observed in the secondary literature, to my knowledge, about the idea of the Buddha's embodiment(s) in this text.

We saw previously, *sarvajñatā* is itself, for Lokakṣema's text in particular but also for the Sanskrit text (based upon its single instance of the term *sarvajñatâmabhāva*), a kind of body. Proceeding on the assumption that the Lokakṣema version of the text as a whole is coherent with itself unless proven otherwise, it would be only consistent to carry that understanding over to the present passage, whether the word *shen* refers to *sarvajñajñāna,* and thus marks the fact overtly, or otherwise. On the whole, therefore, the text posits at least three kinds of embodiment for the Buddha – the physical body during earthly life, which is spoken of as "the body in which [the Buddha] becomes Buddha"; the relics; and the "body of omniscience".

[1551] We should note that where the earlier passage speaks of *sarvajñatā* as a "body" (**ātmabhāva*), this passage does not. I will argue below that it nevertheless assumes and extends the same model as that given in the equivalent to Skt. Ch. 3.

The relationship between the relics and the body of earthly life is indeterminate, at least so far as the explicit pronouncements of the text tell us. But we can observe that (1) here, the relics are said to be less worthy of worship than *prajñāpāramitā* itself because they have a derivative relationship to *prajñāpāramitā* via *sarvajñajñāna*; (2) in the Skt. Ch. 3 passages studied above, relics are said to be less worthy of worship by precisely the same logic, except that there, the logic is applied to the living body of earthly life in which the Buddha attained buddhahood. This parallel suggests strongly that the two – the physical body of the person (*ātmabhāvaśarīra*) and relics (*śarīrāṇi*) – are understood to be but two facets or parts of the same basic continuous entity. I have tried to indicate this inferred relationship by the dotted arrow connecting the body of earthly life and the relics.

As we have seen, the first part of the passage we are currently examining speaks of the relics of the Tathāgata as produced from *prajñāpāramitā,* and in isolation, this pronouncement could be read as meaning that they are produced directly from it. However, as the parallel with the logic of the more extended passage already examined in §4.3.2 shows, the main thrust of both these passages lies in showing that the relationship between *prajñāpāramitā* and whichever form of the physical stuff of the Buddha, living or "*parinirvāṇé*" (to borrow a very useful bit of "Buddhist Hybrid French"!), *is* in fact mediated via *sarvajñatā/sarvajñajñāna*, as indeed our present passage immediately goes on to emphasise. The physical body of the Buddha is therefore derivative, second-rate, and relatively distant from the core of his real nature or being, and this is the reason we should not take the remnants of that body as the supreme cultic object.

Finally, to reiterate a point already made in the context of the earlier passage studied in §4.3.2, this *sarvajñatā/sarvajñajñāna* that interposes itself between the Buddha and this relatively derivative, inessential *śarīra*-body is emphatically characterised as a "body" (*ātmabhāva*) too –

in fact, as a more veritable and suitable "body" than "this crude matter".[1552] I have already argued above that we can understand the adoption of this corporeal conceit as a part of the larger concern of the text to undermine the claim to supremacy of relics, part of the charisma of which derives precisely from the fact that they are bodies of the Buddha and/as vestiges of his living physical body in his last earthly lifetime.

Thus, though the term *dharmakāya* appears nowhere in the Lokakṣema versions of the passages surveyed thus far, it seems very rash to conclude for this reason that there is no sign in his text of anything related to typically Mahāyāna understandings of the Buddha's embodiment. In fact, as I hope to have shown, behind the difficulties of the text lies the clear outlines of an understanding that the Buddha's most veritable embodiment is in fact to be found in various aspects or instances of the gnostic attainments and being of the Buddha – a form of embodiment, moreover, which is identified very closely with *prajñāpāramitā* itself. Little in the material usually pointed to in the Pāli canon as supposed prolepses of the notion of *dharmakāya* could prepare us for this understanding.

Indeed, this theme may be traced further through Lokakṣema's text, as we will see in further passages studied below. Before turning our attention to those passages, however, I will once more survey the "post-history" of the present passage in the later textual development of *Aṣṭa,* through the various versions of the text we have to hand. As we will see, we can observe in our record two phases in the development of the doctrine of this passage. First, we see the notion that the body of the Buddha's final earthly life/the relics is/are a "support" (*āśraya*) of *sarvajñatā,* and not its product, appear first in the translation of Kumārajīva. Second, we see the introduction of the notion of *dharmakāya* to this passage, but not until Xuanzang, and even then,

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1552 In the words, of course, of Master Yoda (one of the greatest exponents of Orientalised, generic "Asian Religion" in the twentieth-century *imaginaire*).

only in one of his two versions of the passage. We will also see, as with the Ch. 3 passage examined earlier, that this passage continued to be a site of no mean doctrinal ferment throughout nearly a thousand years of textual history. Finally, we will also see that the supposed scriptural warrant for the doctrine of *dharmakāya* found in the extant Sanskrit appears, remarkably, in *none* of the seven Chinese versions of the text.

As we have already seen above, the Zhi Qian version of the text is consistent with Lokakṣema,[1553] and does not mention the *dharmakāya* in this passage.[1554] The Fonian version of the text, also, repeats the Lokakṣema model,[1555] though it drops the explicit statement that the relics are a "body" (*shen* 身); it, too, does not mention *dharmakāya*.[1556]

In Kumārajīva's version,[1557] we first see an element of the model of the extant Sanskrit text creeping in. This version of the text clearly states that the relic-body (*śarīra*) are a "support" (*āśraya*) for *sarvajñatā*.[1558] This is only consistent, as we already saw in §4.3.2 above that the Kumārajīva text sees the physical body-cum-*śarīra* as a support. That this development is found only in this layer of the text, and that it is separable from the introduction of the doctrine of *dharmakāya* to this passage, is of special interest given the close chronological coincidence between Kumārajīva and the time when the texts of Maitreya-Asaṇga-Vasubandhu advance the

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[1553] See n. 1545.

[1554] T225.485b08-20.

[1555] See likewise n. 1545.

[1556] T226.517b16-28.

[1557] T227.545a24-b10.

[1558] 諸佛舍利亦如是。從般若波羅蜜生。薩婆若所依止故得供養, T227.545b04-05.

notion of *āśrayaparāvṛtti,* a point to which we will return when we examine the latter concept below.[1559] However, even in Kumārajīva, we do not yet see the idea of the *dharmakāya.*

In one of Xuanzang's versions of the text, relics are lined up alongside plural "various bodies of the Buddha" as products of *prajñāpāramitā.*[1560] This Xuanzang version of the text, like Kumārajīva, also speaks of the Buddha's body as a "support" of *sarvajñajñāna.*[1561] And yet, even this late, we do not yet find *dharmakāya* explicitly mentioned, nor do we see the equation with *bhūtakoṭi,* as we do in the extant Sanskrit.

In the other version of the same passage found in Xuanzang's massive T220, however, we do find most of the important elements of the extant Sanskrit, and even some additional detail that echoes the logic we saw earlier in Skt. Ch. 3:

> "All the *bodhisattva-mahāsattvas* attain to *anuttarasaṃyaksaṃbodhi* by sedulous practice and cultivation in the profound "Dharma-gate" (法門) of the *prajñāpāramitā.* All the Tathāgatas, in accordance with *saṃyaksaṃbodhi,* penetrate completely to Thusness, the *dharmadhātu, dharmatā,* the *bhūtakoṭi* and so on by means of *prajñāpāramitā,* and thereby realise the *dharmakāya.* It is because of this *dharmakāya* that they are called "*buddha*"; and the relics (*śarīrāṇi*) of the Buddha are worshipped, and offerings made to them by worldlings, because they are supported by (依) this *dharmakāya.*"[1562]

In sum, then, we cannot be sure, from the Chinese record, that the notion of *dharmakāya* found its way into this passage any earlier than the time of Xuanzang's Sanskrit text, that is, perhaps, the seventh century; we see that even in his time, a version of the passage *without* the

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[1559] See Ch. 5.2.

[1560] 諸佛身及設利羅。皆因般若波羅蜜多深妙法門而出生, T220 (vol. 7), 877c13-15.

[1561] 佛設利羅亦復如是。深妙般若波羅蜜多。爲因引生一切智智之所依止故。爲一切世間天人阿素洛等供養恭敬, T220 (vol. 7), 877c23-26.

[1562] 一切菩薩摩訶薩眾。皆於般若波羅蜜多甚深法門。精勤修學證得無上正等菩提。一切如來應正等覺皆由般若波羅蜜多通達真如法界法性及實際等成就法身。由法身故說名爲佛。佛設利羅依法身故。乃爲世間恭敬供養, T220 (vol. 7), 781c03-08.

dharmakāya was still in circulation; and we also see that the passage was clearly a site of doctrinal improvisation and ferment, since here, the text has already in some respects gone beyond what we see in our extant Sanskrit version.

By the Dānapāla version,[1563] which is of course, for our purposes, extremely late, we seem to overshoot the mark somewhat, and to find a version of the passage whose doctrine is even more elaborate than the extant Sanskrit text. The text explicitly states that the Buddha has various oddly named bodies – a *nirmāṇa* body of marks (化相身), a body of ultimate truth (實義身), and a body in which he expounds the Dharma (說法身) – but that all these bodies are produced by the *dharmakāya*.[1564] This *dharmakāya* is further, as in the Sanskrit version of the text, identified with *bhūtakoṭi* and *prajñāpāramitā*.[1565] In this version of the text, moreover, the relationship between *sarvajñatā* and "the body of the Tathāgata" seems more complex than in the Sanskrit text, and even paradoxical: it is said that *sarvajñatā* takes the Tathāgata's body as its support, but also that this body is obtained by means of *sarvajñatā*.[1566] Moreover, a further *jñāna,* namely, a **yathābhūtajñāna*(?), interposes itself in the aetiological chain leading to the ultimate production of the Tathāgata's "body".[1567]

Finally, despite the fact that the second Xuanzang version and Dānapāla coincide with the Sanskrit in general spirit and in many details, and even go beyond it to additional levels of

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[1563] T228.601c12-602a18.

[1564] 諸佛如來所有化相身。實義身。說法身。如是等身。皆從法身所出生故.

[1565] 從如實際所出現故。如實際者所謂般若波羅蜜多.

[1566] 如來所有一切智依如來身。是身復由一切智得.

[1567] 從如實智出生如來一切智智。是智復從般若波羅蜜多所生.

elaboration in places, *none* of the Chinese versions of the text – not even the very late version of Dānapāla – contains any parallel to the supposed quote from scripture found in the Sanskrit to warrant the doctrine that the Buddhas are embodied in *dharma*:

> "'The Buddhas, the Bhagavans, have *dharma* for their body (*dharmakāyā buddhā bhagavantaḥ*). Do not think that this *satkāya*[1568] is [my] body (*kāya*). You should see me by means of the consummation of the body of *dharma* (*dharmakāyaparinișpattitas*).'[1569]

To my mind, the fact that this passage does not show up in Chinese translations of the text, even down to the Song dynasty, means that Paul Harrison's apparent confidence that it indeed reflects a putative "Mainstream" doctrine of the *dharmakāya* (despite the fact that it has "we have yet to identify the source" in any Mainstream text)[1570] is premature and misplaced. It seems much more likely, rather, that it reflects a very late adaptation of the *Vakkali-sutta* pericope to the expository demands of a Mahāyāna doctrine of *dharmakāya* that was already extremely well-established.

Regardless of where the supposed scriptural citation might have come from, its absence from all versions of the text but the Sanskrit – even from versions which do, nonetheless, include the concept of *dharmakāya* – also shows that the appeal to scripture and whatever notion of *dharmakāya* it is supposed to convey is not essential to the doctrine expounded here. This, in conjunction with the difficulties observed in Chapter 3.2 of actually finding any solid datable notion of the *dhammakāya/dharmakāya* in materials earlier than Mahāyāna materials, suggests strongly that if we seek the significance of the concept of *dharmakāya* here in supposed "Mainstream sources", we are barking up the wrong tree, and we would be much better served

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[1568] This, of course, recalls the whole discourse of *satkāyadṛṣṭi,* which we examined in §2.1.1.3 above.

[1569] See n. 1535.

[1570] "In two of the AsPP (=*Aṣṭa*) occurrences in question there are indications that the crucial phrase may well have been a quotation from a Mainstream text, although we have yet to identify the source;" Harrison, "Phantom Body" 51.

to locate the concept of *dharmakāya* here in the context of other assertions about it in the same versions of the text in which it appears, first, and second, in the context of the more general schemas of embodiment those versions of the text propose, whether or not those embodiments are called by the names of the *kāyas* most well-known in doctrinal history.

In sum, then, the examination of the present passage has shown us, importantly, that the relics themselves are understood as standing in the same relation to *sarvajñatā* as the "body in which [the Buddha] becomes Buddha". It is also significant that here, as there, this understanding is articulated in the context of a polemic against relics, a fact which suggests, by its treatment of both kinds of embodiment by a parallel logic, that there is some intrinsic equality of status in the view of the text between the body of the Buddha's last earthly life and his relics. Further, we have seen that, as with the earlier passage, this passage continued to be a site of doctrinal ferment and further elaboration for a very long time in the history of the text, and certainly well after the supposed teleological "arrival" of Buddha-body doctrine at its consummation in *trikāya* theory – a triumph which this text seems not to have even noticed! This implies that we certainly need to be very careful about generalising too easily from any one version of the text, including the Sanskrit (which has been the default reference point of many scholars to date, despite the fact that such comparisons reveal it to have numerous peculiarities) to some notion of "the" Prajñāpāramitā doctrine of bodies. Finally, we also saw, significantly, that the supposed scriptural citation that warrants the notion of *dharmakāya* in the Sanskrit version of the text is not to be found in any of the Chinese versions, suggesting first that the scriptural warrant was probably a very late and relatively extrinsic addition to the passage in question, and second, that if we want to understand the doctrine of *dharmakāya* even in those versions of the text where it does appear, we should look elsewhere in those texts and the Prajñāpāramitā literature itself before we go looking in Mainstream contexts.

Thus far, then, we have seen that the Lokakṣema proposes that *sarvajñatā,* which in one passage is emphatically considered a "body", is the source of both the body in which the Buddha became Buddha (in his last earthly lifetime) and also the relics. In the next section, we will expand further on this already rich schema of the Buddha's embodiment by examining a passage that provides us with further details about the nature of a Buddha's last worldly body.

4.3.4 More on the relation between **sarvajñatā* and the last worldly body of the Buddha in Lokakṣema

Two important aspects of *Aṣṭa's* doctrine of Buddha embodiments are found in Ch. 30 of the Sanskrit text (Ch. 28 in Lokakṣema), the overall topic of which is the story of the voyage of a *bodhisattva* called Sadāprarudita to find *prajñāpāramitā.* First, we see a partial foreshadowing of later notions of *nairmāṇikakāya*. Despite the fact that this notion is somewhat tangential to the main theme we are pursuing in our discussion here – namely, the centrality of *sarvajñatā* to the overall schema of Buddha embodiments in the text – we will briefly note this point, which will be relevant in later discussion. Second, and more centrally, we also see here a clear statement of an important relation between *sarvajñatā,* as of the essence of the Buddha's gnostic attainment, and the attainment of the body of thirty-two marks, etc., as its corporeal corollary.

In this chapter, Bodhisattva Sadāprarudita hears a miraculous voice that tells him to seek *prajñāpāramitā* in the East. He sets off, only to realise he did not ask the voice how far he should go, and he is rooted to the spot with remorse for seven days. It seems that his only tactic for continuing his journey is to worship *prajñāpāramitā* with all his might and wait for further miraculous guidance. Here occurs the first passage in the chapter of interest for what it tells us

about ideas of embodiment: a Buddha miraculously appears in the air and tells him to go and seek out a *bodhisattva* called Dharmodgata.

In the Sanskrit text, the appearance of the Buddha is described as follows:

> "When Sadāprarudita thus sorrowed and pined away, the form ("body") of a Tathāgata (*tathāgatavigraha*) [suddenly] stood before him, gave his approval, and said . . . "[1571]

In Lokakṣema's Chinese, we do not see any explicit identification of the magically appearing Buddha as a "body":

> "While the Bodhisattva Sadāprarudita was crying like this, a Buddha magically appeared (化作) in the air above him, and, standing in the air, said, 'Well done, well done . . ."[1572]

As we see, the text here, unlike the Sanskrit text, does not speak of this magically appearing Buddha as a "body" (*vigraha*). It rather speaks of "a Buddha magically appearing". Elsewhere in Lokakṣema's version of the text, however, this same magically appearing Buddha is referred to as a "magic Buddha" or "transformation Buddha" (化佛),[1573] a term that might make us expect something like Skt. **nirmāṇabuddha.* We thus have a conjunction between the corporeal conceit, found only in the Sanskrit text, and the idea that this Buddha or Tathāgata appears by a kind of magical power, found only in the Chinese; between the two, but not in either of them separately, we have the main components of the later idea of the *nairmāṇikakāya*.

[1571] Conze 279, translation modified. *atha khalu subhūte sadāpraruditasya bodhisattvasya mahāsattvasya tathotkaṇṭhitasya tathāgatavigrahaḥ purataḥ sthitvā sādhukāram adāt . . .* Vaidya 240.3-4. The same wording is used later when Sadāprarudita relates his experience to Dharmodgata, Conze 290: *tato me tathāgatavigrahaḥ purataḥ prādurbhūtaḥ . . . ; so 'haṁ tasya tathāgatavigrahasya nirghoṣaṁ śrutvā . . .* Vaidya 251.27, 252.8-9.

[1572] 薩陀波倫菩薩作是啼哭時。上方虛空中化作佛。在空中立言。善哉善哉, T224.471b16-17.

[1573] T224.471b19, b21, b23; 472a18; 473b21, b22.

This passage is important, first, because it shows that in this period, and also in the *milieu* of this very text, it was already understood or claimed that Tathāgatas could appear magically in order to teach or guide *bodhisattvas.* Once more, we must appeal to one of the primary methodological principles of this study, and separate ideas from terms – for our present purposes, it is of secondary importance, though still noteworthy, that this idea is not yet expressed in the terms of the *nairmāṇikakāya.* Indeed, in the Lokakṣema version of the text, the notion of "body" does not appear here at all. Even in Sanskrit, moreover, the "body" here is called a *vigraha,* so that here, too, too narrow a fixation on the terminology of *kāya* would have us overlook the relevance of this passage for the development of ideas about embodiment as a whole.

Despite the protean terminological phase evidenced by the text, however, it is clear that the *idea* of a Tathāgata so appearing in such a body was already established, and further, that it was accepted in the Prajñāpāramitā context, that is, in the context of early Mahāyāna as early as the dawn of our record allows us to determine. This is a point to which we will return in a context where it is more directly relevant, that is, when we come to examine the usually supposed roots of the notion of the *nirmāṇakāya*, usual ideas about the contribution of "the Mahāsāṃghika" to the development of ideas about embodiment, and so on. For the present, however, later passages in the chapter, which discuss the attainment of buddhahood and corporeal consequences thereof, are of more direct relevance to our central discussion here of *sarvajñatā* and its place in the overall doctrine of embodiments.

After receiving the guidance of the magically appearing Buddha, Sadāprarudita has a vision of Buddhas of the ten directions. These Buddhas assure him that their own path to Buddhahood proceeded exactly along the lines he himself is currently following. This statement may be

divided for the purpose of our analysis into two parts: (1) the gnostic condition or essence of the attainment of buddhahood; and (2) its corollaries, in terms of embodiment, but also in terms of the acquisition of other qualities and attributes of a Buddha. We will first examine the gnostic dimension of the attainment of buddhahood as the text describes it.

In the Sanskrit text, this first, gnostic part of the assurance that Sadāprarudita is following the path of the Buddhas themselves is phrased in the following elaborate terms:

> "We also have in the past, when we were Bodhisattvas, searched for the perfection of wisdom in just the same way. We also, while we were searching, acquired just those concentrations which you have acquired just now. After we had acquired them we have gone on our route, established in the perfection of wisdom and the irreversible *dharmas* of a Buddha. But when we survey the original essential nature and the own-being of these concentrations, then we do not see any real dharma that enters into them, or that emerges from them, that would course towards enlightenment, or that would know full enlightenment. This absence of imaginings about any dharma whatsoever, that is this perfection of wisdom. Because we have stood firm in the absence of all self-conceited imaginings . . ."[1574]

In the case of the Chinese text, by contrast, we have only a very simple description of the gnostic attainment that comprised the quintessence of the attainment of Buddhahood for the Buddhas and Lords of all directions. Significantly for our purposes here, however, this description hinges once more on the attainment of omniscience (**sarvajñatā*):

> "We [too], when we were originally *bodhisattvas,* by dint of our sedulous [practice], got to hear the *prajñāpāramitā* and thereby obtained and brought to perfection omniscience . . . ."[1575]

In both texts, however, the present passage goes beyond passages we have already examined earlier, which also presented *sarvajñatā* as of the essence of Buddhahood, the Buddha's most

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[1574] Conze 282: *asmābhir api kulaputra pūrvaṁ bodhisattvacaryāṁ caradbhir evam eva prajñāpāramitā parigaveṣitā. parigaveṣamāṇaiś ca ete eva samādhayaḥ pratilabdhāḥ, ye tvayaitarhi pratilabdhāḥ. enāṁś ca samādhīn pratilabhya gatiṁ gatāḥ saṁvṛttāḥ, prajñāpāramitāyām avinivartanīyeṣu buddhadharmeṣu pratiṣṭhitāḥ. te vayam eteṣām eva samādhīnāṁ prakṛtiṁ svabhāvaṁ vyavalokayantas taṁ dharmaṁ na samanupaśyāmo yaḥ samāpadyate vā vyuttiṣṭhate vā, yo bodhāya caret, yo vā anuttarāṁ samyaksaṁbodhim abhisaṁbudhyeta. iyaṁ sā kulaputra prajñāpāramitā, yā na kena cid dharmeṇa manyamānatā. amanyamānatāsthitair asmābhir. . .* Vaidya 243.12-19.

[1575] 我曹本爲菩薩時。用精進故。得聞般若波羅蜜便成就得薩芸若, T224.472a21-22.

veritable body, etc.; and it shows clearly that this attainment was attended by implications for the corporeality of the Buddha in the fleshly body of his last earthly lifetime, and also the attainment of other special attributes. In the case of the Sanskrit, the text goes on:

> " . . . we have acquired our bodies of golden colour, the thirty-two marks of the superman, the eighty accessory marks, and the splendid haloes around us, and we have reached the unthinkable and supreme cognition of the Buddhas, the wisdom of Buddhas, the supreme concentration of Buddhas, and the perfection of all the *dharmas* and qualities of the Buddhas. Even the Tathāgatas cannot grasp the measure, nor define the boundary, of that perfection of qualities – how much less the Disciples and Pratyekabuddhas."[1576]

Elements of this description are missing in the corresponding Chinese. Nonetheless, in its basic thrust, the doctrine of these attributes attendant upon buddhahood is already strikingly complete:

> " . . . and we will (*sic,* 當) also attain the thirty two marks ([*mahāpuruṣa-*]*lakṣaṇa*), the eighty signs (*anuvyañjana*), the ten kinds of power (*bala*), the four confidences (*vaiśāradya*), the four respects in which protection is not needed,[1577] and the eighteen phenomena unshared [with other kinds of beings] (*aveṇika*[*-dharma*]). We also attained at that time this *samādhi,* and at that time, the Buddhas also praised [us]."[1578]

When we compare this passage with the Sanskrit, we notice that it does not, like the Sanskrit, mention the golden-coloured body, nor haloes; the Sanskrit further goes on to list more generally cognitive attainments, qualities and dharmas, which do not feature in Lokakṣema. In Lokakṣema, conversely, we find the ten powers, the four confidences, the four respects in which protection is unneeded, and the eighteen *aveṇikadharmas*. We should also note, for the

[1576] Conze 282-283: *. . . iyam evaṁ rūpā kāyasya suvarṇavarṇatā pratilabdhā. dvātriṁśac ca mahāpuruṣalakṣaṇāni. aśītiś cānuvyañjanāni. vyāmaprabhatā ca. acintyaṁ ca anuttaraṁ buddhajñānaṁ buddhaprajñā, anuttaraś ca buddhasamādhiḥ, sarvabuddhadharmaguṇapāramitā ca anuprāptā yasyā guṇapāramitāyā na śakyaṁ tathāgatair eva tāvat pramāṇaṁ grahītuṁ paryanto vā nidarśayitum, kiṁ punaḥ śrāvakapratyekabuddhaiḥ.* Vaidya 243.19-23.

[1577] **catur-saṃgraha-vastu* in Dharmarakṣa's *Lotus,* T263.105b22; see Karashima Seishi, DDB s.v. 四事不護.

[1578] 亦復當得三十二相。八十種好。十種力。四無所畏。四事不護。十八事不共。我曹爾時亦復得是三昧。爾時諸佛亦復讚歎, T224.472a22-25.

sake of accuracy, that the Sanskrit specifically speaks of a body (*kāya*) in connection with the golden colour, but Chinese nowhere actually uses a word for body.

Some of the details missing from Lokakṣema's version of this passage appear in other descriptions of the body of the marks elsewhere in the chapter – in particular, the golden colour, the halo, and the emphasis on the fact that these features characterise the Buddha's *body.* The effect of these passages in combination is to regularly present the attainment of the body of marks as an intrinsic part of the attainment of buddhahood. Thus, the attainment of the body of marks is among the details specified by the miraculous voice from the air when it promises Sadāpararudita that he will share in all the attainments of the Buddhas.[1579] The magically appearing Buddha who speaks to Sadāprarudita from the air himself has these marks, a body golden in colour, and a large halo of flames emanating from his body, and this is part of the description given of him to Dharmodgata by Sadāprarudita later in the chapter.[1580] Similarly, Sadāprarudita himself repeats these details when he recounts what has been prophesied for him to a merchant's daughter later in the chapter.[1581]

[1579] 佛所有功德汝悉當得之。得佛三十二相八十種好。汝悉當得之。汝悉當持經法教十方天下人, T224.471a19-21. This promise is not paralleled in the Skt.

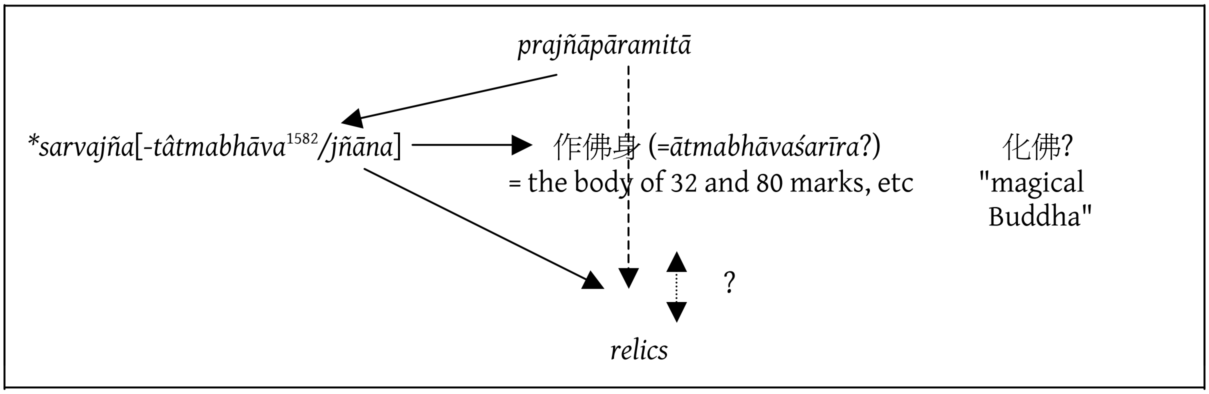
[1580] 薩陀波倫菩薩叉手仰向視化佛。身有金色。身放十億光炎。身有三十二相。見已大歡欣。叉手白化佛言, T224.471b19-21; 於上虛空中有化佛。身有三十二相。紫磨金色身有千億光耀炎出, T224.473, b21-22. As I noted immediately above, the emphasis in these passages is strongly on the fact that these are features of the Buddha's *body*. These descriptions of the magically appearing Buddha are not paralleled in the Skt.

[1581] 薩陀波倫菩薩報女言。師在東方。師名曇無竭。當爲我說般若波羅蜜。我聞者當行守之。當用疾得佛。我身當得三十二相。八十種好。十種力。四事不護。四事無所畏。十八事不共。當得法輪轉。當度脫十方天下人, T224.472c07-12. See Conze 285-286, where the correspondence is of course not exact: *anuttarāṁ samyaksaṁbodhim abhisaṁbudhya suvarṇavarṇaṁ ca kāyaṁ pratilapsyāmahe. dvātriṁśac ca mahāpuruṣalakṣaṇāni aśītiṁ cānuvyañjanāni vyāmaprabhatāṁ ca anantaraśmitāṁ ca mahāmaitrī ca mahākaruṇāṁ ca mahāmuditāṁ ca mahopekṣāṁ ca . . .* Vaidya 246.14-16.

Despite some remaining differences in detail between Lokakṣema's text and the Sanskrit, it is quite striking to note the more important basic agreement between these different versions of the text. Most particularly noteworthy for our present purposes is the fact that already in Lokakṣema, the gnostic attainments of buddhahood are attended by, and indeed presented as the reason for, the attainment of [*the body of*] *marks.* We have already seen in Chapter 3.1 that the body of marks was, by this stage in Buddhist history, an old and established concept of the special embodiment of the Buddha, and it is clear, even from this passage alone, that it was woven into the complex doctrine of embodiment we find in this earliest version of *Aṣṭa.*

Recall that in the first passages we examined above in §4.3.2, corresponding to Skt. Ch. 3, *sarvajñatā* was most emphatically presented in Lokakṣema's version as a kind of *body,* and further, that this body was an offshoot or product of *prajñāpāramitā* and the source of a vaguely defined "body in which [the Buddha] becomes Buddha" (*zuofoshen* 作佛身). It hardly seems possible to doubt that in the present passage, we are being given a much more precise definition of precisely this *zuofoshen.*

Once more, then, on the basis of these passages from Lokakṣema Ch. 28, we can add to our diagram of the overall doctrine of embodiment in the text, thus:



The problematic of embodiment in Lokakṣema's *Aṣṭa,* 3

The proto-corporeal "magical/transformation Buddha", which is not yet marked out specifically as a kind of embodiment in Lokakṣema, also unfortunately exists in an entirely unelaborated relation to these various other instances. I have indicated this fact by placing it off on its own on the side of the diagram; I have indicated its only prototypical or tentative status as an embodiment, and therefore its dubious claim to inclusion in the diagram at all, by a question mark.

In sum, then, we have seen thus far that close examination of several passages dispersed in different chapters of Lokakṣema's translation of *Aṣṭa* shows that the text assumes or propounds a complex schema of multiple embodiments of the Buddha, and further, that *sarvajñatā,* variously spoken of as a *shen* 身 or "body" (*ātmabhāva*), is paramount among these, that is, closest to the essence of what makes a Buddha. In the following section, then, we will fill out this picture by taking a brief further look at the concept of *sarvajñatā* as it features in the text, in order that we can have as accurate a picture as possible of this doctrinal instance central to the text's schema of embodiments.

[1582] We should note that where the earlier passage speaks of *sarvajñatā* as a "body" (**ātmabhāva*), this passage does not. I will argue below that it nevertheless assumes and extends the same model as that given in the equivalent to Skt. Ch. 3.

<u>4.3.5 On the relation and sometime identity between *sarvajñatā* and *prajñāpāramitā*</u>

In the passages we have examined thus far, it has seemed quite clear that *sarvajñatā* is the foremost product from or of *prajñāpāramitā*; this was especially emphasised in Lokakṣema's Ch. 3, which we examined in §4.3.2. That *sarvajñatā* is produced from *prajñāpāramitā* is further confirmed by other passages elsewhere in the text.

When we look more broadly in the text, however, we discover that the relationship between *sarvajñatā* and *prajñāpāramitā* is in fact even closer than these passages might suggest, and in places, indeed, even borders on the paradoxical.

It is clear from a number of passages that the realisation of *prajñāpāramitā* and the realisation of *sarvajñatā* are virtually coterminous for this text. Thus, the text opens with a passage in which Subhūti explains, "starting from *prajñāpāramitā,* how the *bodhisattva-mahāsattvas* go forth into *prajñāpāramitā.*"[1583] In essence, the text teaches, in familiar Prajñāpāramitā terms, that the *bodhisattva* must perceive that there is no such *dharma* as *prajñāpāramitā,* nor a *bodhisattva* who can go forth into it. He must be unafraid at this perception. Anyone who, conversely, gets stuck on signs, or words, or ideas, cannot realise *prajñāpāramitā.* In the course of this discussion, it is clear how closely the realisation of *prajñāpāramitā* and *sarvajñatā* are identified with one another. "When he stands in [i.e. is fixated upon, or takes as real] form, etc., [i.e. the *skandhas*], he courses in *saṃskāras,* not in *prajñāpāramitā* . . . . While he courses in formative influences, he cannot gain *prajñāpāramitā,* nor exert himself upon it, nor fulfil it. When he does not fulfil *prajñāpāramitā,* he cannot go forth to *sarvajñatā* . . ."[1584]

[1583] Conze 83: *prajñāpāramitām ārabhya yathā bodhisattvā mahāsattvāḥ prajñā-pāramitāṁ niryāyur,* Vaidya 3.3-5. 佛使我爲諸菩薩說般若波羅蜜。菩薩當從中學成, T224.425c18-19.

[1584] Conze 85, translation modified: *sa ced rūpe tiṣṭhati, rūpābhisaṁskāre carati, na carati prajñāpāramitāyām| evaṁ sa ced vedanāyāṁ saṁjñāyāṁ saṁskāreṣu. sa ced vijñāne tiṣṭhati, vijñānābhisaṁskāre carati, na carati*

Similarly, when the text proclaims *prajñāpāramitā* supreme among all the six perfections,[1585] a comparison is made to the earth and the various gems that "grow" in it:[1586] *prajñāpāramitā* is like the earth, and the other perfections are the gemstones. The application of this analogy is explained in these words, which once more make *prajñāpāramitā* almost coterminous: " . . . even so, the five [other] perfections, gathered and held in *prajñāpāramitā,* rest in *sarvajñatā,* and [so] resting in *prajñāpāramitā,* the[se other] five perfections flourish."[1587] Elsewhere, in the context

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prajñāpāramitāyām. tatkasya hetoḥ? na hi abhisaṁskāre caran prajñāpāramitāṁ parigṛhṇāti, nāpi prajñāpāramitāyāṁ yogam āpadyate, nāpi prajñāpāramitām paripūrayate. aparipūrayamāṇaḥ prajñāpāramitāṁ na niryāsyati sarvajñatāyām, Vaidya 4.27-5.1. 住色中爲行識。住痛痒思想生死識中爲行識。不當行識。設住其中者。爲不隨般若波羅蜜教。何以故。行識故。是爲不行般若波羅蜜。不行者。菩薩不得薩芸若, T224.426a20-24. See, too, the parallel treatment in Śāriputra's question, Conze 86: "How can a Bodhisattva be known as possessing perfect wisdom, when the very form does not possess the own-being of form, etc., when *prajñāpāramitā* does not possess the own-being of *prajñāpāramitā*, when the very *sarvajñatā* does not possess the own-being of *sarvajñatā*?"; *kiṁ kāraṇam āyuṣman subhūte avirahito bodhisattvo mahāsattvaḥ prajñāpāramitayā veditavyaḥ. yadā rūpam eva virahitaṁ rūpasvabhāvena, evaṁ yadā vedanaiva saṁjñaiva saṁskārā eva, yadā vijñānameva virahitaṁ vijñānasvabhāvena, yadā prajñāpāramitaiva virahitā prajñāpāramitāsvabhāvena, yadā sarvajñataiva virahitā sarvajñatāsvabhāvena,* Vaidya 5.28-31; this parallel is not found in Lokakṣema, which only mentions *prajñāpāramitā*: 菩薩何因曉般若波羅蜜。色離本色。痛痒思想生死識離本識。般若波羅蜜離本般若波羅蜜, T224.426b24-26.

[1585] See n. 1593 for treatment of the earlier part of this passage in a different connection. *Prajñāpāramitā* is again proclaimed supreme among the six perfections, in a manner that connects it closely to *sarvajñatā,* at Conze 118, Vaidya

[1586] In accordance with a common premodern belief about the genesis of precious stones, reflected in various alchemical doctrines.

[1587] Conze 112, translation heavily modified: *prajñāpāramitāsaṁgṛhītāḥ pañca pāramitāḥ sarvajñatāyāṁ pratiṣṭhante. prajñāpāramitāpratiṣṭhitāḥ pañca pāramitā virohanti,* Vaidya 41.1-2. Once more, we find difficulties in the Lokakṣema version of the text here, which reads as if it is making an assertion (here somewhat random and unrelated to the context) that *sarvajñatā* is, once more, produced from *prajñāpāramitā*: 譬如極大地。種散其中同時俱出其生大株。如是阿難。般若波羅蜜者是地。五波羅蜜者是種。從其中生。薩芸若者從般若波羅蜜成, T224.434b18-21. Because of the difficulty in making sense of this assertion here, I hesitate to conclude that the intention of the Chinese is different to that of the Sanskrit, and suspect we may be dealing with a translation problem. However, a similar disparity between these two versions of the text is found at the end of Skt. Ch. 4, where the six perfections are said to be the same, just as the shadows of all the various trees in Jambudvīpa are the same (?!), "all of them upheld by skill in means, converted to the end (*pariṇāmita*) of *prajñāpāramitā,* converted to the end of *sarvajñatā;*" *āsāṁ ṣaṇṇāṁ pāramitānāmupāyakauśalyaparigṛhītānāṁ prajñāpāramitāpariṇāmitānāṁ sarvajñatāpariṇāmitānāṁ,* Vaidya 51.22-23. To this, the Chinese says, "In just this way, the [other] five *pāramitās* are produced from *prajñāpāramitā,* and *prajñāpāramitā* gives rise to *sarvajñatā,*" 五波羅蜜從般若波羅蜜出。般若波羅蜜出薩芸若, T224.436b17-18. It is possible, therefore, though difficult to fathom, that the Chinese is a translation of a version of the text that somehow saw the assertion of this relation

of a paean to *prajñāpāramitā* as the mother of all Buddhas, etc., we even get an absolutely explicit statement that *prajñāpāramitā* and *sarvajñatā* are identical: "*Prajñāpāramitā* is nothing other than *sarvajñatā*."[1588] It is clear from these passages that the text proclaims something very close to an identity between *sarvajñatā* and *prajñāpāramitā,* even if it sometimes presents the former as if it is derivative of the latter.[1589]

Indeed, in at least one place, the Sanskrit text at least seems deliberately to undermine its own formulation, whereby *sarvajñatā* is a product of *prajñāpāramitā,* by proclaiming the inverse relationship to be equally true. When Śakra is moved by the profundity of *prajñāpāramitā* to exclaim in homage to it, he says, "I pay homage, O Lord, to the *prajñāpāramitā*! One pays homage to *sarvajñajñāna* when one pays homage to the *prajñāpāramitā*." The Buddha replies, "So it is. For from it has come forth the *sarvajñatā* of the Buddhas, the Lords, and, conversely, the *prajñāpāramitā* is brought about as something that has come forth from *sarvajñajñāna*."[1590] Lokakṣema is, by comparison, slightly less paradoxical, but still goes very far in identifying the two:

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among the various terms at play here comprehensible, and a justifiable application of the metaphorical conceits.

[1588] *sarvajñataiva bhagavan prajñāpāramitā*, Vaidya 86.13; 天中天。薩芸若者。即般若波羅蜜是, T224.440b21-22; cf. Conze 135.

[1589] See further Conze 191, where the *bodhisattva* has to apperceive *prajñāpāramitā* "through a series [of thoughts] which are inclined to *sarvajñatā*," *sarvajñatā-nimnayā . . . saṁtatyā,* Vaidya 151.3-4, T224.453a05-07. Similarly, when the text asks, "How should a *bodhisattva* consummate the perfection of wisdom?" the answer (that he should contemplate the twelvefold chain of dependent origination in a correct manner) concludes by saying, "When he thus surveys *pratītyasamutpāda,* he acquires *sarvajñajñāna*"; Conze 271 (translation modified), Vaidya 231.27-232.7: *kathaṁ bhagavan bodhisattvena mahāsattvena prajñāpāramitā abhinirhartavyā . . . . evaṁ vyavalokayataḥ subhūte bodhisattvasya mahāsattvasya pratītyasamutpādaḥ sarvajñajñānapratilambho bhavati*; 不共法思惟十二因緣。是時薩芸若智慧悉具足, T224.469c01-02.

[1590] Conze 154, translation modified; Vaidya 105.6-10: *namaskaromi bhagavan prajñāpāramitāyai. sarvajñajñānasya sa bhagavan namaskāraṁ karoti, yaḥ prajñāpāramitāyai namaskāraṁ karoti. bhagavān āha. evam eva kauśika, evam etat. sarvajñajñānasya sa kauśika namaskāraṁ karoti yaḥ prajñāpāramitāyai namaskāraṁ karoti. tat kasya hetoḥ. atonirjātā hi kauśika buddhānāṁ bhagavatāṁ sarvajñatā. sarvajñajñānanirjātā ca punaḥ prajñāpāramitā prabhāvyate.*

> "O Kauśika, to take refuge in [= pay homage to] *sarvajñajñāna* is itself to take refuge in *prajñāpāramitā,* because from it (*prajñāpāramitā*) issues the *sarvajñatā* of the Tathāgatas, the Arhats, the Saṃyaksaṃbuddhas, and *sarvajñajñāna* is illuminated by *prajñāpāramitā;* there is nothing in *prajñāpāramitā* that it (*sarvajñatā*) does not understand."[1591]

It is also clear in several passages that the realisation of *sarvajñatā* is the ultimate goal of "going forth in *prajñāpāramitā*", the *summum bonum* of the salvific project the text proposes. For example, in Chapter 1, Śāriputra expresses his anxieties about the weird mode of practice proposed to him, in which neither practitioner nor goal seem actually to exist, by saying, "The Bodhisattva who trains in this will go forth to *sarvajñatā*?" He is told, "He will. Because all dharmas are unborn and unproduced. When he courses thus, a Bodhisattva comes near to *sarvajñatā*."[1592] That *sarvajñatā* is the ultimate goal of all practice in *prajñāpāramitā* is further confirmed by other passages in the text.[1593]

[1591] 拘翼歸薩芸若慧者。以爲自歸般若波羅蜜。何以故。從是中出怛薩阿竭阿羅呵三耶三佛薩芸若。薩芸若慧者。是般若波羅蜜之所照明。於般若波羅蜜中住者無不解慧, T224.444c13-17.

[1592] Conze 86, translation modified: *kiṁ punar āyuṣman subhūte yo bodhisattvo mahāsattvo 'tra śikṣiṣyate, sa niryāsyati sarvajñatāyām . . . . evam etad āyuṣman śāriputra, evam etat. yo bodhisattvo mahāsattvo 'tra śikṣiṣyate, sa niryāsyati sarvajñatāyām. tat kasya hetoḥ. ajātā hy anirjātā hy āyuṣman śāriputra sarvadharmāḥ. evaṁ carata āyuṣman śāriputra bodhisattvasya mahāsattvasya sarvajñatā āsannībhavati,* Vaidya 6.7-12; 菩薩設使出是中。便自致薩芸若。須菩提言。如是菩薩出是中。便自致薩芸若。何以故。薩芸若無所從生無所從生。如是菩薩疾近作佛。菩薩行般若波羅蜜。於薩芸若中無所罣礙, T224.426b27-c02. It is very odd that Lokakṣema says not that *sarvadharmāḥ* are unoriginated, but that *sarvajñatā* is. I would not want to make too much of this point, however, since it is directly contradicted by statements elsewhere in the text that *sarvajñatā* is produced from *prajñāpāramitā,* and because the two words are also similar enough that it is possible it is a simple error.

Further, in the Sanskrit alone, this passage is immediately followed by a statement of a corporeal corollary to this attainment that is not found in Lokakṣema (though, as we have seen above, the Chinese text, in Ch. 28, recognises the same basic idea): "To the extent that he comes near to *sarvajñatā,* his body, thought and marks shall become perfectly pure, for the sake of maturing beings . . . " Conze 86; *yathā yathā sarvajñatā āsannībhavati, tathā tathā sattvaparipācanāya kāyacittapariśuddhir lakṣaṇapariśuddhiḥ buddhakṣetraśuddhiḥ . . . ,* Vaidya 6.12-13 (Conze omits the purification of his Buddha-land).

[1593] See e.g. Conze 136, Vaidya 86.30-87.10, T224.440c03-12. The centrality of *sarvajñatā* is implicit in Śakra's question, when told that the *prajñāpāramitā* "procures no *dharma*": "Then . . . this *prajñāpāramitā* does not even procure all-knowledge?", *kim iyaṁ bhagavan prajñāpāramitā sarvajñatām api nārpayati,* Vaidya 87.22-23; 般若波羅蜜不還薩芸若者。亦不能得逮, T224.440c19-20. At Vaidya 196.3-4, Conze 235, a *bodhisattva* who is still "with the programme" is described as one who has "not abandoned all beings, nor abandoned *sarvajñatā,* not *anuttarasaṃyaksaṃbodhi*";: 菩薩摩訶薩不捨薩芸若。不置阿耨多羅三耶三菩。是所菩薩摩訶薩不捨薩芸若故。是阿耨多羅三耶三菩阿惟三佛。爲一切護薩和 (*sattva*) 薩[?], T224.461c10-13. Thus *sarvajñatā,* paired with *anuttarasaṃyaksaṃbodhi,* is clearly the gnostic *sine qua non* of the *bodhisattva* vocation.

In sum, then, while there is apparently a slight tendency in the Lokakṣema version of the text to keep *sarvajñatā* and *prajñāpāramitā* more clearly separate than they are in those passages of the Sanskrit text that identify them completely,[1594] it is clear that in any version of the text, *sarvajñatā/sarvajñajñāna* is very closely identified with *prajñāpāramitā*. In some passages, as we have already seen, it is its most essential product or offshoot; in others, it is overtly identified with *prajñāpāramitā*; and in keeping with this very close relationship, it is often identified, along with *prajñāpāramitā* itself and *anuttarasaṃyaksaṃbodhi*, as the central goal of *bodhisattva* practice and the *sine qua non* of buddhahood.

In this light, it is clear what is being claimed when the text presents *sarvajñatā* as playing such a pivotal role in its schemas of the embodiments of the Buddha. Omniscience (*sarvajñatā*), as the gnosis realised upon the consummation of the "perfection of wisdom" (*prajñāpāramitā*), is the most quintessential embodiment of the being of a Buddha. It befits this function as an embodiment (in Lokakṣema's text especially) that it is held to be both identical to

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See also Conze 111, Vaidya 40.18-24, where *prajñāpāramitā* is supreme among the other perfections because it is the inconceivable wisdom that converts (*pari/nam*) *kuśalamūla* (i.e. all religiously meritorious acts) to the end of *sarvajñatā*. The other perfections, in fact, are *only* called "perfections" because and when the are converted to the end of *sarvajñatā*; otherwise they would be imperfect. We should note that the portion of Lokakṣema corresponding to this passage, at T224. 434b03-17, seems to me to most naturally read to mean merely that you have to give in order to have the perfection of *dāna*, you have to practise morality in order to have the perfection of *śīla*, and so on. However, at two points the word *sarvajñatā* 薩芸若 intrudes unintelligibly into the text (434b08, b12), and it is noteworthy that these are precisely the two places where the extant Sanskrit also mentions *sarvajñatā* as the goal of conversion of the merit of the perfections (*kim . . . apariṇāmitaṁ dānaṁ sarvajñatāyāṁ dānapāramitānāmadheyaṁ labhate,* Vaidya 40.19-20; *apariṇāmitā prajñā sarvajñatāyāṁ prajñāpāramitānāmadheyaṁ labhate*, 40.22), whereas in the other case it omits it by ellipsis. It seems most likely, therefore, that we have here a breakdown of translation, but that Lokakṣema had before him a text that in fact read much like the Sanskrit, regardless of how in comes across in his Chinese. Recalling our guiding methodological principle that we are interested in the phase of evolution in these Indian ideas to which Lokakṣema attests, and not in the likely reception of his texts in China, therefore, it seems most plausible to conclude that this passage attests to the central place of the attainment of *sarvajñatā* in the overall practice of the perfections in the case of Lokakṣema's text, also.

[1594] See n. 1587 and the passage cited at n. 1591.

prajñāpāramitā, the "mother of all Buddhas", itself, and also, at the same time, to be somehow separate – just as a body "is" the person embodied, but at the same time, can be distinguished from the person for certain uses. Like a veritable body, further, *sarvajñatā* stands in a particular relation to the buddhahood it embodies: it is adequate and in some sense identical to it, on the one hand, but on the other, it is the particular form of buddhahood *in the world* (which I consistently argue here is a definitional feature of the notion of "body"), that is, it is the particular form in which buddhahood is *realise*d in the specific case of every Buddha among plural Buddhas. That *sarvajñatā* is such a body, finally, implies that the attainment of buddhahood does not mean merely the *acquisition* of such gnosis, as an extrinsic attribute of an untransformed subject, but to *become* that gnosis, such that it is radically the core and extent of one's proper being. As such a body, then, *sarvajñatā* is *the* authentic embodiment of the Buddha, to which all the other embodiments we have traced – the body of the thirty-two marks and the relics of the Buddha – are clearly presented by the text as derivative and secondary.

Once more, it seems worth emphasising how little of this we could have been prepared for by all of the material usually pointed to as the precedents for *dharmakāya,* or any embodiment of the Buddha, in the Pāli canon – that is, how fresh and innovative these doctrines are.

Even this much, however, does not exhaust the doctrines about the Buddha's embodiments contained in this text. We now turn to another set of passages in Lokakṣema that seems clearly to envisage the five "pure aggregates" (*anāsravaskandha*) as a mode of embodiment of the Buddha – a vision which, as we have already seen, has clear precedent in the conception of relics found in inscriptional evidence.

4.3.6 The five "pure aggregates" (*anāsravaskandha*) as an embodiment of the Buddha in Lokakṣema's *Aṣṭa*

We turn next to a set of passages found in Chapter 4 of Lokakṣema's version of *Aṣṭa,* in which the five "pure aggregates" are spoken of in unambiguously corporeal terms, that is to say, they also are cast as a form of embodiment of the Buddha.

The context of this passage is the teaching that a *bodhisattva* can generate more merit by rejoicing in the creation of merit by other beings, especially the illimitable merit created by the Buddhas, than by all the more conventional practices of virtue. The passage begins as follows.[1595]

> [Passage 1:] "At that time Maitreya Bodhisattva said to Subhūti, 'If there is a *bodhisattva-mahāsattva* who rejoices in and approves of (勸助[1596], **anu/mod*) [the merit of others?], the merit thereof will exceed that of a person [who practises] *dāna*, the keeping of precepts, and [mental] continence (自守[1597]); this merit is supreme, most high, unsurpassed – [that is,] the merit of the *bodhisattva-mahāsattva* who rejoices in and approves of [the merit of others?].'
>
> "Subhūti said to Maitreya, 'Further,[1598] a *bodhisattva-mahāsattvas* who [rejoices] in (於)[1599] the merit created by Buddhas[1600] in *buddhakṣetra* beyond count;[1601] [they rejoice]

[1595] Once more, there are aspects of the text here that are obscure, and some details of my translation at tentative. I have again translated with an eye to the way the text probably corresponds to a hypothetical Indic source text after the model of parts of the Sanskrit. It seems clear that Lokakṣema was working from a simpler version of the sentence that contained elements almost identical to those found in the longer version, as I hope I show by parallels. However, correspondences exist to the Chinese only in a minority of parts of the mammoth Sanskrit sentence that lists all the things the *bodhisattva-mahāsattva* considers and rejoices in. (Some other parts of the list seem to occur in latter parts of the chapter in Chinese.) It has therefore seemed more efficient to provide those parallels only in specific footnotes to the relevant phrases in the Chinese, rather than giving the whole sentence including parts irrelevant here. The whole passage corresponds overall to parts of Vaidya 69.2-70.18 Conze 124-126. The interpretation thus arrived at is not necessarily one that would occur to mind of a reader on the basis of the Chinese alone. In fact, the Sanskrit sentence, even if we reduce it to only those parts that correspond to the Chinese, is simply much longer than almost any conceivable sentence in classical Chinese, and it is extremely unlikely that anyone would have read anything this long as a single Chinese utterance.

[1596] Cf. Skt. *anumodanayā anumodeta,* Vaidya 70.16-17; see also Karashima Seishi, s.v. *quanzhu,* DDB.

[1597] See n. 1608 below.

[1598] 復有, cf. Skt. *yat punar* Vaidya 69.9.

in (於) the merit created, merit beyond measure,[1602] by those among the Buddhas in each of these *buddhakṣetras*[1603] who have entered into *parinirvāṇa*,[1604] from the moment when they first conceive of the resolution [to become a Buddha],[1605] until they arrive at *anuttarasaṃyaksaṃbodhi* and realise *abhisaṃbodhi*,[1606] until they enter into *parinirvāṇa* in the *nirupadhiśeṣanirvāṇadhātu,* and [even] thereafter, until their Dharma completely disappears from the world;[1607] and (及) in (於) the merit made by *śrāvakas* through charity (*dāna*), the keeping of precepts (*śīla*), and [mental?] continence (自守, **bhāvanā*?);[1608] [they rejoice] in the merit where something remains [to be learnt] through to the merit where nothing remains [to be learnt];[1609] [they rejoice] in (於) the

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[1599] The repeated preposition 於 throughout the passage ("於阿僧祇 . . . . 於是中 . . . . 於有餘功德 . . . . 於其中所作 . . . . 於其法中復學 . . . ") is its main structuring syntactical feature, and corresponds loosely to the long string of Skt. relative pronouns (*yat . . . yāvat . . . yas . . . yāni . . . yā . . . ye . . . yā . . . yas . . . yā . . . yas . . . yas . . . yad . . . yas . . .* [etc.], *. . . yaiś . . .*) in indicating that the clauses so marked are the object of the *bodhisattva-mahāsattva*'s rejoicing (marked in Skt. by the relative pronominal clause *tat sarvaṁ kuśalamūlaṁ . . .*). Conze manages this long string of correlatives by saying that the *bodhisattva-mahāsattva* "considers" all these things before putting them all together in a single mass and rejoicing in them, etc., but I see nothing in the Skt. corresponding to this verb, and presume it was introduced as a translation device to help manage the very unwieldy syntax by allowing Conze to split the passage into separate sentences and paragraphs; this strategy does not violate the sense, of course, but unsurprisingly, nothing in the Chinese corresponds.

[1600] Nothing, so far as I can see, corresponds exactly to this phrase in the Skt., but it seems likely that it is introduced in anticipation of the "Buddhas" who constitute the subject of the sentence below, in order that the Chinese make sense.

[1601] Cf. Skt. *aprameyāprameyeṣu asaṁkhyeyāsaṁkhyeṣu aparimāṇāparimāṇeṣu acintyācintyeṣu anantāparyanteṣu trisāhasramahāsāhasreṣu lokadhātuṣu . . .* Vaidya 69.10-12

[1602] I have here brought forward, for the purposes of the translation, 於是中所作功德。其功德度無極, which I take to be head of this longest correlative clause; cf. Skt. *ye ca aprameyāsaṁkhyeyā buddhaguṇāḥ,* Vaidya 69.24, "and [that] their merits [are] beyond measure . . ."

[1603] Cf. Skt. *. . . . ekaikasmiṁstrisāhasramahāsāhasre lokadhātau aprameyāprameyāṇāyām asaṁkhyeyāsaṁkhyeyānām* etc*. . . . tathāgatānām . .* Vaidya 69.12-14*.*

[1604] Cf. Skt. *anupadhiśeṣe nirvāṇadhātau parinirvṛtānāṁ . . .* Vaidya 69.18.

[1605] Cf. Skt. *yāvat prathamacittotpādam upādāya . . .* Vaidya 69.17.

[1606] Cf. Skt. *yāvac ca anuttarāṁ samyaksaṁbodhim abhisaṁbuddhānāṁ,* Vaidya 69.17; it seems impossible to take Lokakṣema in exactly the same sense, however.

[1607] Cf. Skt. *yāvac ca saddharmo nāntarhitaḥ . . .* Vaidya 69.18

[1608] Cf. Skt. *yac ca dānamayaṁ puṇyakriyāvastu, śīlamayaṁ puṇyakriyāvastu, bhāvanāmayaṁ puṇyakriyāvastu . . . ,* Vaidya 70.8-9. Note that this phrase appears in the Chinese out of the place we would expect it to come on the basis of the order of the Sanskrit, and it is difficult to make sense of it in its present location, smack in the middle of various phrases about the merit of the Tathāgatas.

merit created by those *parinirvāṇa*-Buddhas though all this [long career],[1610] to the point where *they have a body* 身 *of* śīla*, a body of* samādhi*, a body of* prajñā*, a body of* vimukti*, and a body manifested by* vimuktijñāna;[1611] [they rejoice], moreover (復) all the merit of cultivation (學) in the Dharma, that is, the immensely compassionate Buddha-Dharma,[1612] the Dharma that is expounded by innumerable Buddhas, those *devas* among *devas*[1613] – in (於) [regard to all] this merit created by the *parinirvāṇa* Buddhas, [they] put it all together and measure it,[1614] and rejoice in it, deeming it the highest.[1615] Now, in this rejoicing, he rejoices for the sake of thereupon obtaining *anuttarasaṃyaksaṃbodhi . . .*"[1616]

As we see, where the Sanskrit speaks of five *skandhas* here, Lokakṣema's Chinese speaks unambiguously of five "bodies".[1617] The full significance of this fact can only be appreciated,

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[1609] Cf. Skt. *yāni ca śaikṣāṇy anāsravāṇi kuśalamūlāni, yāni ca aśaikṣāṇy anāsravāṇi kuśalamūlāni . . .* Vaidya 70.6-7, in comparison to which, however, the present Chinese clause occurs out of order.

[1610] 諸有般泥洹佛。於其中所作功德, cf. Skt. *etasminn antare teṣāṃ buddhānāṃ bhagavatāṃ . . .* Vaidya 69.18-19.

[1611] My emphasis. 諸有般泥洹佛。於其中所作功德。至有淨戒身三昧身智慧身已脫身脫慧所現身, cf. Skt. *śīlaskandhaḥ samādhiskandhaḥ prajñāskandho vimuktiskandho vimuktijñanadarśanaksandhaś ca . . .* Vaidya 69.19-20; Conze: "[He considers] the mass [*skandha*] of morality, the mass of concentration, the mass of wisdom, the mass of emancipation, the mass of the vision and cognition of emancipation of those Buddhas and Lords", 124.

[1612] Cf. Skt. *yā ca mahākaruṇā . . .* Vaidya 69.23-24.

[1613] The nearest analogue I can find to this in the Skt. is the only loosely corresponding *ye ca tatra dharmadeśanāsu buddhadharmeṣu pratyekabuddhadharmeṣu śrāvakadharmeṣu vā vinītāḥ śikṣitā adhimuktā niyatāḥ saṁbodhiparāyaṇāḥ . . .* Vaidya 69.31-70.1.

[1614] Cf. Skt. *aikadhyam abhisaṁkṣipya piṇḍayitvā tulayitvā agrayā . . .* Vaidya 70.14-15.

[1615] Cf. Skt. *anumodanayā anumodeta śreṣṭhayā jyeṣṭhayā . . .* Vaidya 70.15.

[1616] T224.438a14-b03: 爾時彌勒菩薩謂須菩提。若有菩薩摩訶薩。勸助爲福。出人布施持戒自守者上。其福轉尊極上無過。菩薩摩訶薩勸助福德。須菩提謂彌勒菩薩。復有菩薩摩訶薩。於阿僧祇刹土諸佛所而作功德。一一刹土不可計佛。其般泥洹者。乃從本發意已來。自致阿耨多羅三耶三菩。成至阿惟三佛者。乃至無餘泥洹界而般泥洹者。然後至于法盡。於是中所作功德。其功德度無極。及諸聲聞作布施持戒自守爲福。於有餘功德自致無餘。諸有般泥洹佛。於其中所作功德。至有淨戒身三昧身智慧身已脫身脫慧所現身。佛法極大哀。不可計佛天中天所說法。於其法中復學諸所有功德。乃於諸般泥洹佛所作功德。都計之合之。勸助爲尊。種種德中爲極是上。其勸助者。是爲勸助。勸助已持作阿耨多羅三耶三菩. . .

[1617] Elsewhere, in speaking of the ordinary (afflicted, defiled) five *skandhas,* Lokakṣema uses the translation term *yin* 陰. Note that in An Shigao's T603, which should be even earlier than Lokakṣema, we find an apparent instance of the use of the word *shen* for the *skandhas,* though directly alongside the more usual *yin*: 彼五陰爲四身有。從所有色陰。是屬身。從有痛陰是屬痛身。從有識陰是屬意身。

however, once we have in view a larger pattern throughout the chapter of which this passage is only one part. I will therefore postpone discussion of this passage until we have laid out all the relevant passages.

In the Sanskrit version of the text, the very long sentence corresponding to this passage becomes a piece of boilerplate, large chunks of which are repeated verbatim eight times throughout the remainder of the chapter. Similarly, in the Chinese, we also find parts of the overall idea conveyed here repeated throughout the chapter, though not so exactly, nor so many times. These repetitions take place in the context of a sophisticated discussion of the exact cognitive attitude the *bodhisattva* must adopt towards the things in whose merit he rejoices, such that he will be able to successfully convert (*pariṇāmayati*) the merit derived from rejoicing to the end of obtaining *anuttarasaṃyaksaṃbodhi* (勸助已持是福德。作阿耨多羅三耶三). The *bodhisattva* is warned off simplistic efforts to convert merit from rejoicing to this end. In essence, he must rejoice in the items listed without "treating them as signs" (*nimittī/kṛ,* 作思想). However, we need not enter into the details of this discussion for our purposes here; we need only pay attention to the language used in repeating the boilerplate about the five *anāsravaskandha* in each case.

[Passage 2:] The second instance of this exact formula in the Chinese text occurs in the context of an analogy between the teachings poorly grasped and food with poison concealed in it. Those who misapprehend the meaning of what is taught will advise others to rejoice in the vast

從有想陰亦[衛-韋+正]陰。是屬法身。從有是五陰, T603.175c13-16. The minority use of the term *shen* for *skandha* seems to have continued into later translation history. In Saṃghadeva's T26 *Madhyamâgama,* for instance, the names of the five *anāsravaskandhas* are also translated with *shen*; T26.486c24-487a12. This is also true in his *Ekôttarâgama,* e.g. T125.641a09-15. Note that Saṃghadeva worked with Zhu Fonian, who also prefers *shen* in his translations of relevant passages in Prajñāpāramitā texts. However, given that this translation was made much later than Lokakṣema, it may prove no more than that the translator was following this earlier terminology.

merits listed and convert it to the end of *anuttarasaṃyaksaṃbodhi,* but because they do so in a metaphysically faulty manner, that is, by "treating them as signs", their advice is faulty. In the Chinese, the abbreviated list of the things the merit of which they thus ineptly rejoice in and attempt to convert to full awakening includes an exact repetition of the phrasing already found above in the first part of the passage.[1618] However, that in this case, in both Sanskrit and Chinese, the realisation of the (body of the) five pure aggregates is now given pride of place as the foremost or most representative item of the earlier long list of meritorious objects of rejoicing.[1619] This suggests that the attainment of these five pure aggregates, or (in Lokakṣema's case) the "body" (or bodies) so comprised, is most central to the manifold attainments of the Buddhas that the *bodhisattva* celebrates.

[Passage 3:] A third instance of the same formula is found in the context of a comparison between the merit that would be won by countless beings throughout all world systems who served with limitless wonderful offerings countless *bodhisattva-mahāsattva* who were intent upon *anuttarasaṃyaksaṃbodhi*, on the one hand, and beings who transfer the merit of correctly rejoicing in the merit of the Buddhas, on the other.[1620] Unsurprisingly, the latter group are said

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[1618] 持戒身三昧身智慧身已脫身脫慧所現身 . . . [and a list of other meritorious things to rejoice in] 而作功德都勸助之。勸助已持是福德。作阿耨多羅三耶三菩, T224.439a15-18. See Conze 129-130.

[1619] In both Sanskrit and Chinese, the list is somewhat abbreviated in this instance, and in both cases, the (body of the) five pure aggregates are put first. For Skt. see Vaidya 77.3-27, esp. the five *anāsravaskandha* at 11-12. Conze's translation here obfuscates the sense of the text even more than usual, in part because of his practice of abbreviating and summarising without notice (i.e. without adopting any conventions to indicate this fact in his text), but also in part because of some confusingly infelicitous choice of terms. The only indication of this long passage in his text is thus "they will instruct and admonish others to consider the mass of merit of the past, future and present Buddhas and Lords, in the way described before".

[1620] T224.440a01-11, Vaidya 81.13-82.2. Conze abbreviates heavily here, and eliminates the reference to the five pure aggregates entirely: "Let us, in the same manner, consider the case of all beings in countless world systems who, having made a vow to gain full enlightenment, and having raised their thoughts to enlightenment, would give gifts on the extensive scale describe before. On the other hand we consider a Bodhisattva, taken hold of by the perfection of wisdom and by skill in means, who takes hold of the wholesome roots of all the Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, Pratyekabuddhas and Disciples, and of all other beings

to accrue the vastly greater merit. Here, once again, the five *skandhas* are taken as the foremost of the meritorious objects of jubilation and almost as an epitome of the whole sum total of good roots in the universe. Here too, once more, the Sanskrit names these five items as *skandha,*[1621]and Lokakṣema repeats verbatim the same translation used in Passages 1 and 2, calling them each a "body".[1622]

In a fourth passage, however, we encounter a variant mode of talking about these five items, both in Sanskrit and in Chinese. The text describes the right way for a *bodhisattva* to transfer or transform (*pari/ṇām*) the merit deriving from his rejoicing in merit, by contrast to the "poisoned" wrong way discussed above. This time the emphasis is on the *bodhisattva* realising that those things whose merit is converted to the end of *anuttarasaṃyaksaṃbodhi* are not worldly, that is, "not included in the *kāmadhātu,* the *rūpadhātu,* the *ārūpyadhātu,* that they are not past, future or present" – that is, that they exist in "this world" nowhere in space or time.[1623] In the course of this passage, the five pure aggregates occur again. Two points are of interest to us. First, this time, the five *anāsravaskandha* are taken to stand in for the entire list of merits and meritorious things, as if they are its epitome, or at least, a the synecdoche that most representatively can stand for the whole. This is the case in both Sanskrit and Chinese:

> [Passage 4:] "Moreover, the *bodhisattva-mahāsattva* should convert [merit] in a manner such that [he understands] that the *śīla, samādhi, prajñā, vimukti* and the body

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also the wholesome roots which have been planted, will be planted, and are being planted, and who rejoices over them all in the way described above"; 132.

[1621] *atītānāgatapratyutpannānāṁ buddhānāṁ bhagavatāṁ śīlaskandhaṁ samādhiskandhaṁ prajñāskandhaṁ vimuktiskandhaṁ vimuktijñānadarśanaskandhaṁ . . .* Vaidya 81.22-23.

[1622]菩薩摩訶薩勸助之所施。爲過去當來今現在佛。淨戒身。三昧身。智慧身。已脫身。脫慧所現身。及諸聲聞在其中者所作功德。都共計之合之。不及勸助者。若勸助者。以是極尊無能過者。作是勸助。勸助已。持作阿耨多羅三耶三菩, T224.440a06-11.

[1623] *aparyāpannaṁ kāmadhātau aparyāpannaṁ rūpadhātau aparyāpannam ārūīpyadhātau nāpy atītaṁ na anāgataṁ na pratyutpannam . . .* Vaidya 78.10-11.

manifested by (所現身)[1624] *vimuktijñāna* do not exist [in] the realm of desire, do not exist [in] the realm of material form, do not exist [in] the realm of the formless; neither do they exist [in] past, future or present; and the merit converted also does not exist."[1625]

The second point of interest is that the language used for naming the five pure aggregates is different here. The Sanskrit, first, does not even call these five items *skandhas.* It is possibly all the more significant, therefore, that in that case of *vimuktijñānadarśana,* at least, the Lokakṣema version retains *suoxianshen,* that is, that Lokakṣema still insists on emphasising the notion of "body" for this term. We cannot tell, of course, whether the version Lokakṣema had before him included the word *skandha* here or not. If it did, it means that his text emphasised the status of these five qualities as substitutes for the ordinary *skandhas* more than our present Sanskrit. If the text Lokakṣema worked from did not have -*skandha,* like our present Sanskrit, it seems all the more significant that Lokakṣema insisted upon it, and further translated it, as above, with *shen* "body". Either way, we have evidence that some writers at this phase of Prajñāpāramitā textual history – either Lokakṣema alone, or Lokakṣema and his source text – emphasised the corporeality of this rubric *more* than the later Sanskrit.

This same pattern is seen twice more in the Lokakṣema text, only not in the context of a full list of the five pure aggregates. Once more, the text is describing the correct attitude that the *bodhisattva* must have in order to transfer the merit of rejoicing to *anuttarasaṃyaksaṃbodhi*. He

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1624 The Chinese syntax makes it impossible to tell for sure whether 所現身 attaches only to *vimuktijñānadarśana,* or to all five of the *anāsravaskandha*; on the one hand, in earlier passages where all five *skandhas* are specifically spoken of as "bodies", only *vimuktijñānadarśana* has been called *suoxianshen,* and the other four have been called merely *shen*; on the other hand, it would be consistent with the earlier passages that all five *skandhas* are still being thought of as *shen* of some kind. I have provisionally opted for the first interpretation because it is the more conservative (we can be sure corporeality is being asserted for at least this *skandha,* but not the other four).

1625 復次菩薩摩訶薩當作是施。如淨戒。如三昧。如智慧。如已脫。如脫慧所現身。無欲界。無色界。無欲無色界。亦無過去當來今現在。亦無所有。所作施亦復無所有, T224.439a28-b02. *yac chīlaṁ yaḥ samādhiryā prajñā yā vimuktir yad vimuktijñānadarśanaṁ tad yathā aparyāpannaṁ kāmadhātau aparyāpannaṁ rūpadhātau aparyāpannamārūīpyadhātau nāpyatītaṁ na anāgataṁ na pratyutpannam. tat kasya hetoḥ. tryadhvatraidhātukāparyāpannatvāt. tathaiva pariṇāmo 'py aparyāpannaḥ. yatrāpi dharme sa pariṇāmaḥ pariṇāmyate, so 'pi dharmo 'paryāpannaḥ;* Vaidya 78.10-11.

must consider all dharmas as fabricated by imaginative construction, unborn, not come forth, not come, not gone and so on. The passage, taking *vimukti* ("liberation") as a paradigm case, then goes on to say that the *bodhisattva* must consider an entire list of items after its model, beginning with the six perfections and later including rejoicing itself, the meritorious things rejoiced in, the act of transference of merit etc. Among this list we also read, "as *vimukti,* so *vimuktijñānadarśanam*".[1626] The Chinese deals with this thus:

> [Passage 5:] "Moreover, Subhūti, a *bodhisattva-mahāsattva* rejoices on behalf (代)[1627] in (於) [the meritorious acts] of the Buddhas of past, future and present, [viz.:] he rejoices on their behalf in their acts of charity; he rejoices on their behalf in their morality (*śīla*), patience (*kṣānti*), vigour (*vīrya*), absorption (*dhyāna*), and wisdom (*prajñā*); he rejoices on their behalf in their liberation (*vimukti*); he rejoices on their behalf in their body manifested by the special knowledge of liberation (*vimuktijñāna*) (脫慧所現身). [And] just as he rejoices in this manner on their behalf (作是代勸助) for their liberation, so [for] their charity;[1628] just as for liberation, so for morality; just as for liberation, so for patience; just as for liberation, so for vigour; just as for liberation, so for absorption; just as for liberation, so for wisdom; just as for liberation, so for the body manifested by special knowledge of liberation; just as for liberation, so for liberation (*sic*); just as for liberation, [so for] rejoicing on behalf; just as for liberation, so for *dharmas* past, present and future;[1629] just as for liberation, so . . .'"[1630]

[1626] *yathā vimuktis tathā vimuktijñānadarśanam,* Vaidya 82.24. Here, once again, we miss this in Conze thanks to his abbreviation of the text: "so the morality, etc.", 133.

[1627] The precise sense of *dai* 代 here is somewhat obscure. Clearly it refers to the fact that the *bodhisattva* is rejoicing in acts he himself did not commit, and that his rejoicing is thus vicarious. In most instances, however, we could read either "he rejoices in vicarious acts of charity" or "he rejoices vicariously in acts of charity". It seems, however, from the phrase 作是代勸助 halfway through the passage, that it is actually the rejoicing that is vicarious, and that the intent is not to imply that the acts of the Buddhas were committed somehow "for" or "on behalf of" other beings who benefit therefrom or the *bodhisattva* who rejoices therein. Note also that nothing corresponds to this *dai* in Skt., and conversely, that Sanskrit speaks of a *bodhisattvamahāsattva* who "wishes to rejoice" in these various things (*anumoditukāmena*), to which nothing corresponds obviously in the Chinese. This complementary distribution might lead us to suspect that Lokakṣema was somehow using *dai* to mean "want to", but I know of no reading of *dai* that would allow this interpretation.

[1628] I have allowed myself to be guided in interpreting the repeated 其脫者是爲 . . . by the parallel with the Sanskrit *yathā vimuktis tathā . . .* Without this parallel, it would probably more naturally be read, "And this '*vimukti*' is . . . "

[1629] The second *shi* 是 here (是故當來有) seems to be for correlative *ye* (*dharmāḥ . . .*)

[1630]復次須菩提。菩薩摩訶薩於過去當來今現在佛所。代作布施者勸助之。代持戒忍辱精進一心智慧而勸助之。代已脫者勸助之。代脫慧所現身勸助之。作是代勸助。其脫者是爲布施。其脫者是爲持戒。其脫者是爲忍辱。其脫者是爲精進。其脫者是爲一心。其脫者是爲智慧。其脫者是爲脫慧。其脫者是爲脫慧所現身。其脫者是爲已脫。其脫者代其勸助。其脫者是爲法(。)是故當來有[。]如其

In this passage, then, in the context of a different list of meritorious objects of rejoicing that seems at base to be an extension of the list of perfections (*pāramitā*), we see twice more the pattern whereby *vimuktijñāna*[-*darśana*] is translated by Lokakṣema with the phrase "*the body manifested by* vimuktijñāna".

The overall pattern in these latter three passages seems to be that even when Lokakṣema's version of the text is willing to refrain from speaking of the other four *anāsravaskandha* as "bodies", it still insists that *vimuktijñāna* "manifests a body". To my mind, this aspect of the text is best interpreted in the light of its insistence, as we have seen above, that the Buddha is most veritably embodied in some kind of gnosis. In this case, too, it is gnosis (*jñāna*) that is most emphatically described by means of the corporeal conceit.

In sum, therefore, we see that in a number of passages, Lokakṣema's interpretation of this rubric of the five "pure aggregates" insists on making them corporeal, that is, on speaking of them as "bodies". This is, moreover, particularly the case with the last of the aggregates, that is, the seeing (*darśana*) of the special knowledge (*jñāna*) of liberation.

Now, there are at least three reasons that this aspect of the way the text talks about the Buddha's embodiments are of interest to us here. First, as we have seen above, the five *anāsravaskandha* were already associated, in inscriptional evidence, with what I have argued is

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脫者 etc., T224.440a22-b05. Skt. *punar aparaṁ subhūte bodhisattvayānikena pudgalena atītānāgatapratyutpannānāṁ sarveṣāṁ buddhānāṁ bhagavatāṁ dānam anumoditukāmena śīlam anumoditukāmena kṣāntim anumoditukāmena vīryam anumoditukāmena dhyānam anumoditukāmena prajñām anumoditakāmena evam anumoditavyam. yathā vimuktis tathā dānam, yathā vimuktis tathā śīlaṁ, yathā vimuktis tathā kṣāntiḥ, yathā vimuktis tathā vīryam, yathā vimuktis tathā dhyānam, yathā vimuktis tathā prajñā, <u>yathā vimuktis tathā vimuktijñānadarśanam</u>, yathā vimuktis tathā anumodanā, yathā vimuktis tathā anumodanāsahagataṁ puṇyakriyāvastu, yathā vimuktis tathā pariṇāmanā . . . . yathā vimuktis tathā te dharmā ye 'tītā niruddhāḥ, yathā vimuktis tathā te dharmā ye 'nāgatā anutpannāḥ, yathā vimuktis tathā te dharmā ye etar hi pratyutpannā vartamānāḥ, yathā vimuktis tathā te . . .* Vaidya 82.20-29.

an even earlier form of special embodiment for the Buddha – the relics.[1631] In the present context, that is, of a text that is clearly working hard to usurp the pride of place occupied by relics in cultic practice, it is surely significant that this very language, which we have only hitherto ever seen used of relics, is used to articulate a competing conception of embodiment.

Further, the five *anāsravaskandhas,* as I argued briefly above, can already be understood as a nascent model of corporeality or embodiment, if we consider that the rubric of the five ordinary *skandhas* (*rūpa, vedanā, saṃjñā, saṃskāra* and *vijñāna*) can be understood as an analysis of ordinary embodiment. In Lokakṣema's translation, however, as we see here, the corporeality of this model becomes overt when he translates *skandha* by Chinese *shen* 身, "body". Given the rather rich and complex doctrine of embodiment we have already observed elsewhere in the text, we thus already seem to see here a clear step in the integration of this notion into larger and more ramified schema of various embodiments, or embodiment spoken of in multifarious terms.

Most significantly, however, is the striking parallel we observe between the overall doctrines of embodiment we thus observe in *Aṣṭa* as a whole and the notion of *dharmakāya* as it was (to be?) formalised in the context of Sarvâstivāda scholasticism. In the Sarvâstivāda model, as we have already mentioned and as we will see in detail below, the *dharmakāya* seems to have been understood most paradigmatically as a body comprised of *bodhi,* which was in turn comprised of special kinds of *jñāna* and the five *anāsravaskandha* as "attendant" secondary qualities. It is very striking, then, that here, even though we do not see the use of the *term dharmakāya,* the overall model of embodiment presented by the text is comprised, on the whole, of the same

[1631] We saw examples of this in the "Kopśakasa Reliquary" of 26 CE, the "Inscription de l'an 98 d'Azès" of 40 CE, and the "Senavarma Inscription" of the early first century CE. See n. 1143, 1144, and p. 556 ff. respectively.

basic set of elements – on the one hand, special *jñāna,* that is, sometimes as *sarvajñatā/sarvajñajñāna*[1632] and sometimes as *vimuktijñāna*[-*darśana*], which especially in the case of the former is very closely associated with *bodhi* in the form of *anuttarasaṃyaksaṃbodhi*; and on the other hand, exactly the same set of five pure aggregates whose status as a body in the text we have been examining here.

Among the consequences of this striking overlap between the Sarvâstivāda doctrines and those found already, in a form which though slightly vague is on the whole quite fully fledged, in Lokakṣema's *Aṣṭa* is a thorny problem of relative chronology. The key sources for the relevant Sarvâstivādin ideas are attested much later in our Chinese record (despite speculations about a much earlier date of composition for the *Mahāvibhāṣā* in particular), and as we have already seen above in Chapter 3 of this dissertation, there is nothing in the Pāli materials that resembles those ideas. We thus have no objective way, that I can see, of determining whether these ideas are Sarvâstivādin in their origin, and we see them here adopted into and adapted for the early Mahāyāna context, or whether in fact they originate in precisely the context of the discourse we see here. We will return to the discussion of this tricky problem below when we deal with the Sarvâstivāda counterparts of these ideas, and with the more general problem of whether or not we can really be confident in the chronological priority of specific ideas attributed to the "Mainstream schools".

Indeed, we might say much the same of other conceptions of the special embodiment of the Buddha that we have observed in the text in the course of our analysis, for it is certainly not the case that the rich doctrine of the Buddha's embodiments in this text stops as this fascinating juxtaposition of special kinds of gnosis and the five pure aggregates. As we have

[1632] Lokakṣema uses these terms somewhat interchangeably, like the Sanskrit.

also seen, it is held to be a regular and important concomitant of the attainment of the gnostic conditions of buddhahood that the new Buddha also acquires the body of marks, replete with minor marks, golden colour, halo, and what is already quite a full set of further qualities. Once more, we are faced with a conception that we have never seen in the earlier record – the deliberate and overt articulation of the body of marks with other special forms of the Buddha's embodiment, and the overt ascription of that body to the causality of his supreme gnosis, rather than merely by implication to the immense merit accumulated through the course of his Herculean aeons of *bodhisattva* practice. Once more, too, we have no way that I can see in this case either of determining on the objective evidence before us whether these ideas were borrowed into this text from some external context, or whether they are first elaborated in the Prajñāpāramitā and early Mahāyāna context – indeed, perhaps in the very text we have been reading. The "black box" that intervenes between the latest Pāli-canonical materials and the earliest Chinese evidence hides all evidence that might allow us to decide such questions, much though we might like to know their answers, and all we know is that at the dawn of the Chinese record and anything datable (aside from a few inscriptions) in post-canonical history, these ideas have already sprung as if fully-fledged, like Athena from the head of Zeus.

4.3.7 That Buddhas "do not come and go" and are therefore *like* the absolute in Lokakṣema's *Aṣṭa*

Thus far, we have seen that Lokakṣema's version of *Aṣṭa* contains rich ideas about multiple forms in which the Buddha(s) may be embodied. However, we have also seen no sign that it contains any fully fledged version of the later doctrine I will refer to here as the "classic" Mahāyāna metaphysical doctrine of *dharmakāya,* whereby the Buddha is understood as embodied in or as the Mahāyāna "absolute", under the name most typically (in connection to *dharmakāya* doctrine) of *dharmatā,* but also under a range of other conceptual heads. Indeed, I

can accept Paul Harrison's conclusion that such a conception of the *dharmakāya* is not to be found in Lokakṣema, but *only* in the very restricted sense that (1) it is not to be found under that name and (2) that we assume as our criterion for recognising that the concept goes under that name only where the term *dharmakāya* or equivalents is also found in *other* extant versions of the text (the implicit terms on which Harrison examines the question).

These two parameters are far too restrictive, however. Once we suspend them, we see, in fact, (1) that most of important components of the "classic" notion of *dharmakāya* are present in Lokakṣema, but not by that name; and (2) that in texts other than *Aṣṭa,* Lokakṣema does in fact apply the term *fashen* 法身 to important parts of this coalescing set of concepts, but where other extant versions of the same texts give *dharmatā, dharmadhātu, sarvadharmāḥ* etc. Once more, then, if we are to have an accurate picture of the development of the concepts we study, we should avoid being too fixated on terms, and try to see through them to the underlying ideas.[1633]

In the case of Lokakṣema's *Aṣṭa,* this methodological principle necessitates, I believe, that we first briefly note the way that version of the text handles a key passage at the beginning of the "Dharmodgata" passage (included in Chapter 28 of Lokakṣema's text). The passage is preached by Dharmodgata in response to a question from Sadāprarudita, who asks where Buddhas come from, and where they go. In the resulting answer to this question, in later versions of the text, the absolute is discussed under a range of labels and understandings. In the case of each, the point is made that it "does not come or go (anywhere)", and also that the Buddha is identical to each; the upshot of the argument is that Sadāprarudita's question is misguided, and the

[1633] Kajiyama Yūichi recognises that ideas close to the "classic" Mahāyāna *dharmakāya* are present in the earliest Chinese Praj. translations despite the absence of the term: "Stūpas, the Mother of Buddhas, and Dharma-Body" 13-14.

Buddhas, likewise, do not come from anywhere, or go anywhere. As we will have occasion to observe below when we come to consider Mokṣala's *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā,* not too long after the time of Lokakṣema, this passage (which is paralleled in Mokṣala, even though his text is not a translation of *Aṣṭa* itself) was to develop to a point where the Tathāgata was clearly being identified with *dharmatā*; in even later versions of the text, beginning in our record with Kumārajīva, the concept of *dharmakāya* was to be overtly deployed in precisely this context. The passage is thus a key site in which we can observe the development of the later "classic" Mahāyāna metaphysical understanding of *dharmakāya*, and it is for this reason that it is important for us to establish how much of its content, if any, is already present in Lokakṣema.

Lokakṣema's version of the passage reads thus:

> "Emptiness (空, *śūnyatā*?) originally does not come from anywhere, and does not go anywhere; so too with the Buddha. The signless (?無想, **animitta*?[1634]) originally does not come from anywhere, and does not go anywhere; so too with the Buddha. The unlocateable (?無處所, **adeśâpradeśa*?[1635]) originally does not come from anywhere, and does not go anywhere; so too with the Buddha. The 'formless' (無形)[1636] . . . . The illusory (幻) . . . . A mirage (?野馬)[1637] . . . . A person in a dream . . . . Nirvāṇa (cf. Skt. *nirodha*) . . . . Imaginary images (想像) . . . . The unborn (無有生**ajāta*? cf. Skt. *anutpāda*) and ungrowing (?無所適) . . . . you should know that it is so, also, with the Buddha. The unpassing (無有適, **acyuta*?) originally does not come from anywhere, and does not go anywhere; you should know that it is so, also, with the Buddha. Space (虛空, cf. Skt.

[1634] See Harrison, "Real Phantom Body" 60, where he suggests this reading for 無有想 in a different context.

[1635] Cf. Vaidya 235.17, *sarvadharmādeśāpradeśataḥ* [*prajñāpāramitā anugantavyā*], "[Perfection of wisdom is to be known] from the fact that all dharmas have neither place nor locality", Conze, *Eight Thousand* 274.

[1636] As we have seen in our examination of LAn, *wuxing* in Lokakṣema seems to be associated with the teaching of emptiness, etc., and in LAn Ch. corresponding to Tib. v. 95, corresponds to *ngo by nyid med* = **niḥsvabhāva*? – for which see n. 1436 etc.

[1637] Ordinarily Ch. *yema* refers to "vapours that roil in the wilderness", the *locus classicus* being the *Zhuangzi*; *Hanyu dacidian,* s.v. *yema*. However, after acknowledging the *Zhuangzi* sense of the word, the *Yiqie jing yin yi* states, "This is what the 'Great Treatise' refers to when it speaks of seeing heat waves and taking them for water when oppressed by extreme thirst," 大論云飢渴悶極見熱氣謂爲水是也, T2128.358b08-09. The present text itself also uses the term *yema* in another passage, where it clearly refers to something illusory T224.470b12-14.

> *ākāśadhātu*) originally . . . . The realm of *dharma* (經果, var. 經界)[1638] and its fruit originally . . . . The 'edge of the fundamental' (本端, for **bhūtakoṭi*?) originally does not come from anywhere and does not go anywhere. You should know that it is so, also, with the Buddha."[1639]

As can be seen from the many points at which my translation here is doubtful, many of the specific terms for the absolute here are idiosyncratic and not paralleled in the extant Sanskrit version of the text. Some of the terms lined up here, moreover – the illusory, a mirage, imaginary images – are more usually associated in Buddhist discourse with the world of ignorance than with the ideal contents of the realm of truth, which makes it difficult to be sure that the sense in which the domain of "that which neither comes nor goes" is being understood in this version of the text. Conversely, it is also the case that some of the best-known terms for the absolute in the later tradition – in particular, *tathatā* "thusness"[1640] – are missing from this

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[1638] The Song, Yuan, Ming and Palace editions of the canon read *jingjie* 經界. Given Lokakṣema's known habit of translating *jing, jingfa, fajing,* apparently for *dharma-,* in other contexts (e.g. in 諸經法 for *sarvadharma*), it seems most plausible to read this otherwise strange compound as representing *dharmadhātu*. Note that Zhi Qian also has *jingjie* in the same place, T225.505b29-c01. (Perhaps another, more far-fetched possibility is reading 徑 for 經, to give 徑果"the path and its fruit", *mārgaphala*?)

[1639] T224.473c09-24.

[1640] Detailed consideration of the concept of thusness in Lokakṣema would take us too far afield here, though it might well have bearing on our understanding of the nature of the "absolute" and therefore, indirectly, of the understanding of buddhahood in the text. Suffice it to say here that in the passage where *tathatā* is discussed most extensively in the Skt. text, the opening to Ch. 16 (Lokakṣema Ch. 14), Lokakṣema has *benwu* 本無 in places corresponding to *tathatā*. While this has led some previous scholars to conclude that *benwu* was Lokakṣema's way of expressing the concept of *tathatā*, this may be somewhat hasty, especially where we have no independent evidence that the very notion of *tathatā,* as it is later understood, existed at this time. Certainly, on the face of it, *benwu* should mean something more like "fundamental nothingness" or "basic/radical inexistence", and if we suspend our preconceptions derived from reading through the lenses of later understandings, it is possible that this is precisely what is intended by it in Lokakṣema's *Aṣṭa*. To give an example, we might read a sentence like 住隨怛薩阿竭教。怛薩阿竭本無無異。本無無異也。諸法是無異。無異怛薩阿竭本無無所罣礙。諸法本無無所罣礙。怛薩阿竭本無。諸法本無礙。一本無等無異本無 (T224.453b11-15) roughly thus: "According to the Tathāgata's teaching, the radical inexistence of the Tathāgata admits of no differences. This non-differentiation of radical inexistence is the non-differentiation of all *dharmas,* which are thus no different from the radical inexistence of the Tathāgata, such that there is no mutual exclusion between them [i.e. they flow into one another utterly, with no impediment]; there is thus no mutual exclusion between the fundamental inexistence of all *dharmas* either. The fundamental inexistence of the Tathāgatas is the fundamental inexistence of all *dharmas*; each fundamental inexistence is identical with, and indistinct from, the other fundamental inexistence." Further examination of this difficult question will hinge in part on what would have been understood in non-Buddhist Chinese circles in the late Han by the term *benwu,* and in part upon a careful reading of the relevant passages in Lokakṣema's texts. In the interim,

version of the text. Nonetheless, despite these difficulties, it is clear, without necessarily having to clear up every problematic textual detail in it, that Lokakṣema already had before him a passage which agreed in some fundamentals with the later versions of the passage into which the term *dharmakāya* was eventually woven.

First, it is clear that the central *point* of the passage is that the Buddha(s) neither come(s) nor go(es); these are, in Lokakṣema also, the terms of the question from Sadāprarudita that spurs the discourse, and at each step the analogy to the Buddha is emphasised. Second, enough likely cognate concepts of some of the classic Mahāyāna terms and metaphors for the "absolute" are present (*śūnyatā, ākāśa, anutpāda, nirodha/nirvāṇa,* probably *dharmadhātu,* perhaps *bhūtakoṭi*) that there can be little doubt, given the conjunction with the conceit of "neither coming nor going", that we are dealing here with a genuine if early form of that doctrine; the "absolute" has already arrived on the scene. Third, despite the fact that the Buddha is only said to be *like* this "absolute" as variously described, and not strictly *identified with* the absolute as in later versions of the passage, it also seems clear, from the fact that the central thrust of the passage is to show that Buddhas "do not come and go", that already the association between the Buddha and the absolute is quite strong. For these reasons, though I would certainly not go so far as to say that it is already understood that the Buddha is *embodied in* the absolute here, or even that his being is totally identified with it, I would also argue that we must acknowledge that we see here already a significant beginning in the direction of that later understanding, and that it would be equally overstated to claim that we have no inkling in Lokakṣema's text of the later understanding of the Mahāyāna absolute *per se,* or of the later identification between the Buddha and that absolute.

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however, given how greatly different such a reading is from any that reads for *benwu* an "orthodox" understanding of *tathatā,* it seems to me that we should be cautious in concluding that the text contains any conception of *tathatā* at all, notwithstanding the fact that passages exist parallel to passages containing *tathatā* in the much later Sanskrit text.

Our examination of this hazy precedent to the later identification of the Buddha with the absolute in fact concludes our survey of the doctrines in Lokakṣema's *Aṣṭa* that either directly propound some vision of the Buddha's embodiments, or bear on later doctrines. However, we have not yet finished with the text, for we have not yet dealt with the passage that has received the most attention in previous studies of the emergence of the notion of the *dharmakāya,* nor with claims about Lokakṣema's understanding of that term more generally. We will turn to the examination of that evidence momentarily, but before we do, it will be useful to summarise our findings thus far.

Thus, as we have seen, Lokakṣema's *Aṣṭa* contains the following components of a rich set of ideas about the Buddha's embodiments: (1) a doctrine that the most veritable embodiment of the Buddha is his special gnosis (*sarvajñatā,* closely associated with [*anuttarasaṃyak-*]*saṃbodhi,* and also, in some cases, a *vimuktijñāna* whose corporeality is specially emphasised); (2) a doctrine that both the attainment of this (body of) gnosis is regularly attended by the attainment of a special physical body (the body of marks); (3) a doctrine that argues, by a parallel logic, that both the last worldly body of the Buddha and the relics that remain of that body after *parinirvāṇa* are products of (the body of) *sarvajñatā,* and therefore of secondary importance; (4) a polemic against relics as the most efficacious objects of merit-making cultic activity, in favour of *prajñāpāramitā* (very closely identified with [the body of] *sarvajñatā*) as same, which forms an important context for the advancement of these ideas about the Buddha's embodiments; and (5) an inkling of the idea that Buddhas can also magically manifest other forms or bodies for the purposes of teaching, which stands in uncertain relation to its other doctrines about embodiments.

Of course, it is noteworthy that in none of this rich material does the term *dharmakāya* occur, nor, indeed, the name of any of the other special *buddhakāya* that have monopolised the attention of scholars who study the problem of the Buddha's bodies. This fact of terminology seems to have been the factor that determined that nearly all the ideas surveyed thus far in the chapter have been entirely ignored by scholars of ideas about the Buddha's bodies to date, and that even those ideas that have been touched on (primarily the polemic against relics) have been interpreted in a vacuum, with no reference to the overall system of ideas about embodiments we have traced here. We now turn our attention to the study of the only passage in Lokakṣema's *Aṣṭa* where the term *dharmakāya* may occur, and beyond Lokakṣema, to the gradual appearance in the Prajñāpāramitā literature as a whole of both the term *dharmakāya* and an understanding of *dharmakāya* whereby *dharma* is equated with an absolute (most typically *dharmatā*).

4.3.8 The sole passage in Lokakṣema's *Aṣṭa* that may feature the term *dharmakāya*

Just about the only feature of Lokakṣema's *Aṣṭa* to which any attention has been paid by previous scholarship about the bodies of the Buddha is its failure to include passages that, in later versions of the text, mention the word *dharmakāya*; and, for this reason, just about the only *passage* that previous scholarship has paid attention to has been the sole passage in which that term may appear. This passage has been quite thoroughly studied, and here, I will only briefly summarise what is already known about it, and discuss its implications for my overall analysis.

The passage in question, in Lokakṣema, is translated by Paul Harrison as follows:

> "You should carefully study [the Prajñāpāramitā] and accept it in its entirety, bear it all in mind, keep it, and copy out its words correctly without error or loss [since] it is

equivalent to and not different from the 'body of the scriptures' of the Buddhas (*fojingshen* 佛經身) of the past, future and present."[1641]

Conze's translation of the corresponding Sanskrit reads:

> " You should attend well to this perfection of wisdom, bear it well in mind, study it well, and spread it well. When one learns it, one should carefully analyse it grammatically, letter by letter, syllable by syllable, word by word. For as the dharma-body (*dharmakāyatā*) of the past, future and present Tathāgatas is this *dharma*-text [*sic,* for *dharmatā*!] authoritative."[1642]

There are a number of difficulties in deciding exactly what is going on here, some of which are glossed over in Conze's translation and previous studies.

First, Lewis Lancaster has summarised the various versions of this passage.[1643] As he notes, Zhi Qian merely has "Buddha's *sūtras*" (佛經) here.[1644] Fonian omits this section. In Kumārajīva[1645] and Xuanzang,[1646] the translation is rather "*treasury* of *dharma*" (*fazang* 法藏), for which Lancaster suggests a possible Skt. *kośa.*[1647] In the Chinese record, it is (once more) not until Dānapāla that we see an agreement with the extant Skt, and find the word *fashen* (法身).[1648]

1641 Harrison, "Real Phantom Body" 57. 當諦學。悉具足受。悉念持書。字令正無缺減。過去當來今現在。佛經身等無異, T224.468c16-18.

1642 *sumanasikṛtā ca sudhṛtā ca suparyavāptā ca supravartitā ca tvayā ānanda iyaṁ prajñāpāramitā kartavyā. suparivyaktenākṣarapadavyañjanena suniruktā codgrahītavyā.tat kasya hetoḥ. atītānāgatapratyutpannānāṁ hi ānanda tathāgatānāmarhatāṁ samyaksaṁbuddhānāṁ dharmakāyateti tāṁ dharmatāṁ pramāṇīkṛtya.* Vaidya 228.11-14.

1643 Lancaster diss., 93-94.

1644 往古來今佛經等無異, T225. 502c19-20.

1645 般若波羅蜜是過去未來現在諸佛法藏故, T227.577c24-25.

1646 是諸菩薩則爲受持過去未來現在諸佛甚深法藏, T220 (vol. 7), 918a10-11.

1647 The remainder of Lancaster's discussion of these various translations and the likely reasons for them strikes me as being of little help; Lancaster diss., p. 94.

1648 此般若波羅蜜多。即是過去未來現在諸佛法身故, T228.664b27-28.

These various versions of the text present us with quite a puzzle.

On the basis of the Kumārajīva and Xuanzang versions, Lancaster suggests that Lokakṣema's *shen* might be a translation for *kośa* also, though this would scarcely explain *fojing* in Zhi Qian. Lancaster himself also points out that we might object to the hypothesis that this term translates *kośa* that later in the same passage, the word *kośa* is indeed translated by *zang* even in Lokakṣema.[1649] Despite Lancaster's rather loose confidence that *kośa, kāya* and *skandha* are all more or less equivalent in meaning "collection", moreover, *shen* 身 would be a very odd translation for *kośa,* and we would want to see evidence that such a translation is known elsewhere before we could accept his hypothesis.

It seems, on the strength of the Zhi Qian parallel, that we should rather assume that both Lokakṣema and Zhi Qian worked from a version of the text that said simply that the *prajñāpāramitā* is equivalent to the Buddha's *sūtras.* The text seems then to have gone through a phase in which this locus featured something like the assertion that *prajñāpāramitā* is a *dharmakośa* of the Buddhas, which still follows it shortly in our extant texts,[1650] and is most likely reflected in Kumārajīva and Xuanzang's *fazang*. Finally, as reflected in Dānapāla and Sanskrit, the notion of *dharmakāya* seems to have been inserted into this place in the text, probably quite late.

[1649] 六波羅蜜者。佛不可盡經法之藏, T224.469a04-06. *eṣā hi ānanda tathāgatānām arhatāṁ samyaksaṁbuddhānām akṣayo dharmakoṣaḥ, yaduta prajñāpāramitā . . . .* Vaidya 229.21-22.

[1650] See e.g. the passages cited in n. 1649.

It seems most likely, if we assume such a scenario, that it is largely coincidental that Lokakṣema inserted the word *shen* in precisely the place where the later tradition was to attach the notion of *dharmakāya* to the text. Of course, we cannot know, on the strength of this single passage alone, what reason he might have had for doing so, tantalising though this may be when the passage seems to promise (and has been interpreted as) our earliest instance of the term *dharmakāya* in the Prajñāpāramitā context. This may be interpretable as part of a larger pattern in the text, however. We have already had occasion to note above that Lokakṣema seems in a number of places to insist more upon a corporeal conceit, in regard to certain concepts in the text, than other extant versions. This was certainly the case, for instance, with the passage on *sarvajñatā*[-*ātmabhāva*] with which we began our analysis (§4.3.2), where only Fonian, among the remaining versions of the text, spoke of *sarvajñatā* as a body to anything like the same degree. It may be the case that the present passage is also part of a similar tendency in the text, to insist to an exceptional degree on making explicit the bodily dimension or implications of its various ideas.[1651]

If it is thus difficult to understand exactly what Lokakṣema's text means or is intended to convey, therefore, there are equal difficulties on the side of the Sanskrit text, which are further obfuscated by Conze's translation. One would never know, from this translation, that the terms at stake here are actually *dharmakāya*<u>*tā*</u>*,* not *dharmakāya,* and *dharma*<u>*tā*</u>*,* where he has inexplicably "dharma-*text*". I confess I am not entirely sure what the Sanskrit sentence means, but a more transparent translation might be: "It is as (*iti*) the *dharmakāya*-<u>ness</u> of the

[1651] Of course, this immediately begs the question why Lokakṣema, or the phase in Prajñāpāramitā history to which his translation bears witness, might have been particularly eager to emphasise the corporeal conceit, and I confess that at this stage in my research I have no idea why this might be, unless it is perhaps that the polemic against relics was fresh and urgent at the time, but also only in its infancy, and thus that it was felt necessary to try and elaborate alternative models of the Buddha's corporeality on as many occasions as possible.

Tathāgatas, the Arhats, the Saṃyaksaṃbuddhas of past, future and present that this *dharmatā* (viz. *prajñāpāramitā*) is taken as an authoritative source of true knowledge (i.e. as a *pramāṇa*)."

Here, it is difficult to know what might be meant by *dharmakāyatā*, but the simplest reading is that it refers to the quality or state of the Buddhas *whereby* they are embodied in *dharma,* not to their "Dharma body" *per se*. Another reading, however, is that the phrase refers to the status of *something else* as it serves in the capacity of *dharmakāya* to the Buddhas – specifically, to *prajñāpāramitā*. We will return to this question momentarily.

It is important, moreover, for arguments about the interpretation of this Sanskrit version of the passage, that it clearly calls *prajñāpāramitā* not a "*dharma*", but *dharmatā*; *dharmatā* being, of course, one of the terms precisely for the absolute (also variously *bhūtakoṭi, dharmadhātu, tathatā* etc.) the identification with which is the hallmark of "the" (most classically or stereotypically) Mahāyāna doctrine of *dharmakāya*. Indeed, as we have seen in passing above, certainly by Kumārajīva's translation of MPPŚ, it was even possible to speak of a **dharmatākāya* (法性身),[1652] which seems to have been roughly coterminous with the *dharmakāya* in such a classically Mahāyāna understanding. The presence of the notion of *dharmatā* here, in such close conjunction with the notion of *dharmakāya*, seems to me to have at least two implications.

First, it is difficult to see how Harrison can claim in the face of this Sanskrit passage that "even in the later Sanskrit text of AsPP (=*Aṣṭa*) . . . it is perfectly comprehensible in terms of the multivalent Mainstream interpretation of the word . . . . . there is no real support for Lancaster's contention that *dharmakāya* is one of the specifically Mahāyāna doctrines inserted

[1652] See n. 952.

into the text . . ."[1653] By this, Harrison means that all uses of the term *dharmakāya* in the Sanskrit text, including this one, "can" be interpreted (are "perfectly comprehensible") as referring to "the body or collection of qualities, principles, truths or teachings".[1654] He is particularly concerned to exclude from this range of possibilities precisely the "classic" Mahāyāna reading where *dharma-* refers to any metaphysical or realisational absolute. And yet surely, if the text refers to *prajñāpāramitā* as a *dharmatā,* the most natural reading possible is precisely that it is identifying it with such an absolute; and if the text further says that this *dharmatā*, namely *prajñāpāramitā,* is taken as a reliable yardstick or source of truth (*pramāṇa*) "as" the *dharmakāya*-ness of the Tathāgatas, etc., the most natural reading is surely that it means that it is taken as such a *pramāṇa* insofar as it itself *is* their *dharmakāya.* To return to the problem of how to read *dharmakāyatā,* then, we could translate:

> "It is with reference to/in the sense of its (*iti*) status *as* the *dharmakāya* (*dharmakāyatā*) of the Tathāgatas, the Arhats, the Saṃyaksaṃbuddhas of past, future and present that this *dharmatā* (viz. *prajñāpāramitā*) is taken as a *pramāṇa.*"

As we will see below, the application of the term *dharmakāya* to the "classic" Mahāyāna metaphysical interpretation is preceded by a phase in which imagines the Buddha in a very similar relation to *dharmatā.* However, in this phase, this relation is not yet overtly framed in terms of embodiment. In this light, it seems possible that the present passage in the Sanskrit text might be read as sealing the deal whereby the identification was eventually made between *dharmatā* in this sense and the (already pre-existing) term *dharmakāya.*

[1653] Harrison, "Real Phantom Body" 58. Harrison cites Conze's translation, and complains that it "blurs the issue" in that it makes the passage sound, illegitimately in Harrison's opinion, as if it is talking of *dharmakāya* in the sense it appears in *trikāya* theory; 57. Harrison, however, does not offer an alternative translation of the Sanskrit, and does not address the problem of the way the word *dharmatā* enters into the passage.

[1654] Harrison, "Real Phantom Body" 58.

This reading is, however, of course speculative, and there is perhaps too little in the passage itself to be sure either way exactly what is meant by its reference to *dharmakāyatā*. However, if it is correct, then it leads to a second implication. As I stated above, I conditionally agree with Harrison that there is no evidence that the conception of *dharmakāya* wherein *dharma-* refers to a Mahāyāna absolute, such as *dharmatā, tathatā* etc., existed as early as Lokakṣema, *advanced under the name of* dharmakāya, *where other extant texts also agree with this terminology*. This means that it would be startling, to say the least – not to say downright anachronistic – if this one passage was the sole place where we found such a concept advanced overtly in that terminological guise so early in history. If, however, this is the sense in which the concept of *dharmakāya* eventually enters into the text at this point, in the Sanskrit and presumably Dānapāla; if, further, it is primarily the coincidence in the same place in the text of the term *fajingshen* in Lokakṣema that leads scholars to look here for an early instance of the notion of *dharmakāya*; and yet if, as seems to be the case, it is almost impossible to imagine that *fajingshen* could be a translation of *dharmakāya* in this sense – in these circumstances, it seems even clearer that it is merely an historical coincidence that 身 features in Lokakṣema, and *dharmakāya* in Dānapāla and Skt., at opposite ends of the developmental history of the text, and therefore, that if we chase "the concept" of *dharmakāya* in this part of Lokakṣema's text, we are clutching at a mirage.

Whether or not all of my suggestions here are correct, the complexity of the discussion, and the very uncertain foundation it shows us to have in the evidence for any sort of firm conclusions, has hopefully shown that if anything, this passage is one of the last places we should look in Lokakṣema's *Aṣṭa* if we want to learn anything firm about its implications for the overall history of the Buddha's embodiments – and especially in contrast with the rich evidence of complex conceptions of embodiment elsewhere in the text that we have already examined above.

Before we leave the question of the term *fojingshen,* we should note that there is one other instance of the same term in a text most likely due to Lokakṣema:

> "When the *bodhisattva* praises the marks of the Buddha, he thinks in his heart: 'May all the beings of the ten directions attain a *jingshen* (**dharmakāya*?) like that of the Buddhas (如佛經身); may they all attain the wisdom of the Buddhas (佛智慧); may they all attain the ten powers;' this the path the *bodhisattva* practises constantly."[1655]

In the next earliest translation of the same text, by Zhi Qian, we find in the same place the straightforward *fashen,* "*dharmakāya*".[1656] It seems likely, in light of this additional passage, that both Zhi Qian and Lokakṣema alike had before them the term *dharmakāya,* and this therefore makes it more plausible that in Lokakṣema's *Aṣṭa,* alike, the term *fojingshen* translates the same term. However, this is only suggestion, and I am reluctant to conclude too certainly, on the basis of these two passages only, that the *dharmakāya* was already known by that name in Lokakṣema's time.

Fortunately, the present passages are not the only place in Lokakṣema's corpus where we find terms that are (or at least, are most likely) translations of *dharmakāya.* Even more fortunately, Paul Harrison has already applied his expertise in the Lokakṣema corpus to a survey of these instances long ago. Let us turn, then, to those other instances of the term, and see what more

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[1655] 菩薩稱譽佛相時。心念言。十方天下人。皆使身體。悉具足如佛經身。菩薩臥坐時。心念言。十方天下人。皆使得佛智慧。得十力。是爲菩薩常所行道, T282.454a03-07. On T282 as a Lokakṣema text, see Jan Nattier, "Proto-History of the *Buddhāvataṃsaka*". I am grateful to Prof. Nattier herself for bringing this paper to my attention.

[1656]畢住讚佛//當願眾生/光明神德/如佛法身/暮將洗足/當願眾生/得四神足/周遍十方/昏夜寢息/當願眾生/離於闇冥/無復五蓋/臥覺當願/都使眾生/得佛十八 . . . T281.449b18-23. In Śikṣānanda, the term is only "Buddha-body" (成就佛身), T279.72a12-17. For a translation of the Śikṣānanda version of the passage, see Cleary, *Flower Ornament Scripture* 328-329: "Praising the Buddha's distinguishing marks,/ They should wish that all beings/ Fulfill the bases of spiritual powers,/ Unhindered wherever they go.// When going to sleep at night,/ They should wish that all beings/ Attain physical easy/ And undisturbed minds.// Awakening from sleep,/ They should wish that all beings/ Awaken omniscience,/ Perceiving all directions." Note the way the "ten powers" have been substituted for a generic "omniscience" here by the time we get to Śikṣānanda's version of the text.

we can glean from them about the understanding of the term **dharmakāya* in this early phase of Mahāyāna evolution. Indeed, I will argue that scrutiny of these passages even casts further light on the mysterious single instance of the term *fojingshen* in *Aṣṭa* itself.

4.3.9 Other instances of *fashen* in Lokakṣema's corpus

When we look further afield, at other uses of terms apparently corresponding to **dharmakāya*, things get stranger. We will begin by examining several uses of the term *fashen* 法身, which in conjunction give further evidence that Lokakṣema's texts witness a much richer landscape of ideas about embodiment than has been recognised previously.

Harrison shows that in a several places in his translation of the *Druma-kinnararāja-paripṛcchā-sūtra* T624 (hereafter *Druma*), Lokakṣema uses *fashen* 法身 (usu. *dharmakāya*), this time without *jing,* where the extant Tibetan has *dharmadhātu* (*chos kyi dbyings*), and where Kumārajīva has the equivalent *fajie* 法界.[1657] This is also the case in a number of passages from his *Ajātaśatru-kaukṛtya-vinodanā-sūtra* (hereafter *Ajāta*).[1658] This is indeed a strange conjunction of terms in the different versions of the texts, but on scrutiny, the passages concerned seem to pose a number of problems for Harrison's interpretation of *dharmakāya* and related terms in the Lokakṣema corpus, and possibly to lead in directions other than those he himself pursues.

First, Harrison states, on the basis of the equivalents in these later versions of the text, that "there can be little doubt that Lokakṣema has rendered *dharmadhātu,* contrasted with *sattvadhātu,* as *fashen*".[1659] And yet, just because these *later* versions agree in giving *dharmadhātu,*

[1657] Harrison, "Real Phantom Body" 61-63.

[1658] Harrison, "Real Phantom Body" 64.

[1659] Harrison, "Real Phantom Body" 62.

we have no guarantee that Lokakṣema indeed had the word *dharmadhātu* before him, and that his translation here is not rather evidence of an earlier version of the text in which the wording differed. Before making such judgements, we must consider carefully that we have no other version of the text so early, and that it is clearly observable in other respects that the wording of the texts changes over time.

Second, close examination of some of these *Druma* passages suggests that the term *fashen* is indeed applied to concepts in which the prototypical outline of concepts of the *dharmakāya* known from elsewhere are clearly discernible. In concert, moreover, these passages strongly suggest that a synthesis of various ideas more complex than Harrison is willing to entertain is already taking shape under the rubric of *fashen* = **dharmakāya* in this text.

To begin with, one passage, regardless of whether Lokakṣema's use of *fashen* may reflect this that Sanskrit term, seems clearly to point in the direction of precisely the "classic" Mahāyāna understanding of the Buddha as identified with, and therefore on the way to being embodied in, a metaphysical "absolute". At 7K, we read "knowing that all Buddhas are one Buddha, by virtue of [their] entry into the inconceivable *dharmadhātu*";[1660] to this, Lokakṣema reads, in Harrison's translation, "All Buddhas are nothing but one Buddha. For what reason? Because [their] penetration of the body of *dharmas* (*fashen*) is incalculable."[1661] Whatever the term at play here might be, it is surely significant, though Harrison does not seem to notice it, that in virtue of their entry into or participation in the *fashen,* all the Buddhas are *one*. This goes against Harrison's consistent contention throughout his paper that no passages in this layer of the

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[1660] *chos kyi dbyings bsam gyis mi khyab pa la zhugs pas/ sangs rgyas thams cad sangs rgyas gcig tu shes pa;* Harrison, "Real Phantom Body" 62.

[1661] 一切佛爲一佛耳。何以故。法身所入不可計故, T624.358b05-06.

Mahāyāna literature are inconsistent with what he calls the "Mainstream" reading, in which *dharmakāya* refers to embodiment in a collection of plural *dharmas,* variously construed, and in which, he claims, no trace of the identification of the Buddha with a unitary absolute is to be found. In fact, this passage, even in Lokakṣema's rendering, would rather suggest precisely that we are on our way to an understanding of buddhahood as equivalent to such a unitary metaphysical ground of various phenomena, whether by the name of *dharmakāya* or not.

Indeed, this seems not to be the only place where Harrison has overlooked equivalences between Lokakṣema's *fashen* and terms for the Mahāyāna "absolute". As he himself mentions, *Ajāta* also contains a passage in which multiple instances of *fashen* apparently correspond in part to Tib. *chos nyid,* Skt. **dharmatā.* (We will have further occasion below, in §7.1.10, to see that the term *dharmatā* plays an important role in the emergence of still nascent prototypical conceptions of *dharmakāya* in Mokṣala's *Pañca.*) In these same passages, Dharmarakṣa, according to Harrison, has in places *dharmadhātu* (法界).

Elsewhere again in *Druma,* at 9G, the term *fashen* is not used for *dharmadhātu,* but rather, most interestingly, where the Tibetan has merely "the body of the Buddha" (*sangs rgyas kyi sku*), in a passage speaking of "commemoration of the Buddha in order to acquire the body of the Buddha/*fashen*" (常念佛得法身, T624.361b29). This passage, on closer scrutiny, seems to reflect other dimensions of the nascent doctrine of Buddha embodiments we have already seen above in Lokakṣema's *Aṣṭa,* and to add to it the identification of embodiment in *bodhi* and *jñāna* as **dharmakāya* or some equivalent. Harrison passes quickly over this passage, which he considers anomalous enough that "we could postulate a corruption", saying nonetheless that "it is also possible that the translator has settled on *fashen* as conveying the true sense of

buddhakāya".[1662] And yet, if this is so, it may well be quite significant that Lokakṣema made this choice, especially in a context where the basic question at issue is the means to attain *anuttarasaṃyaksaṃbodhi;*[1663] where the first means propounded to this end is the attainment of *sarvajñatā*;[1664] and in immediate conjunction with a further injunction to "attain *buddhajñāna*";[1665] the resonances of all of which with aspects of doctrines of embodiment significantly different from anything in the Pāli materials should be clear after our extended examination of *Aṣṭa* passages in §4.3.2-4.3.5 above. We have also already seen above that in the case of *Aṣṭa,* at least, either Lokakṣema's texts emphasised corporeal dimensions of ideas that fell out of view in later versions, or else Lokakṣema appears willing to phrase his translations in order to emphasise corporeal dimensions he sees in ideas even where this corporeality is not explicit in the texts he translates. Either way, I would argue that the most plausible reading of the present *Druma* passage is indeed precisely that someone, be it Lokakṣema or the Indic author he translates, does indeed see *fashen/*dharmakāya* as the most apt way of talking about a body the Buddha realises in close conjunction with the attainment of his gnostic realisation (*bodhi, jñāna*), and that the specific application of this terminology to that kind of embodiment is a significant fact at this phase of doctrinal evolution.

Still another *Druma* passage mentioned only in passing by Harrison seems significantly to use the term *fashen* to label yet another understanding of the Buddha's embodiment which, as we shall see, was elsewhere to represent an important arm of *dharmakāya* doctrine. In this case,

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[1662] Harrison, "Real Phantom Body" 62.

[1663] 自致阿耨多羅三耶三菩提, T624.361b11; this theme runs throughout the passage, T624.361b09-c17.

[1664] 以一事離於母人。疾得男子。至阿耨多羅三耶三菩提。何謂一事。以發薩芸若。作無央數功德而不忘。是爲一事, T624.361b12-14.

[1665] 常念法得佛慧, T624.361b29-c01.

the understanding is compatible with Harrison's so-called "Mainstream" interpretation of the *dharmakāya,* since it represents embodiment in the *buddhadharmas.* The passage in question occurs at 11D, where *fashen* once more corresponds to Tib. and Kumārajīva equivalents of **dharmadhātu*. Uniquely among the three versions of the text Harrison treats, Lokakṣema alone not only apparently speaks of *dharmadhātu,* but, as Harrison himself notes without seeming to appreciate the significance of the fact, goes on to list "the ten powers, the four assurances [= confidences] and the eighteen exclusive *dharmas* (*āveṇikadharmāḥ*)".[1666] As we will discuss in more detail below, in the context of an analysis of Mokṣala's *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā* and also later in examining Sarvâstivādin doctrines of the *dharmakāya,* the notion of *dharmakāya* as referring to the Buddha's embodiment in these and other *buddhadharmas* was (to become) an important dimension of *dharmakāya* doctrine, if not already at the stage of doctrinal development represented by Lokakṣema, at least soon thereafter. It can scarcely be coincidental, therefore, that the only version of the text to use a term apparently corresponding to **dharmakāya* is also the only version of the text to include these *buddhadharmas* immediately following in the list.[1667] This can only mean that *fashen* is, at least in this case, not merely an idiosyncratic translation of **dharmadhātu,* but a deliberate reflection of a different understanding, in which the corporeal motif plays a much stronger role.

[1666] Harrison, "Real Phantom Body" 63: 不壞法身聲。十種力聲。四無所畏聲。十八法不共聲。阿耨多羅三耶三菩提聲, T624.363c18-20 (the word *sheng* 聲 "sound" at the end of each term stems from the fact that this is a part of a list of "sixty-four *dharma*-sounds").

[1667] This conception of the **dharmakāya* seems also to be behind a passage from *Ajāta* mentioned by Harrison, in which Lokakṣema provides *fashen* where the Tib. has "the *bodhisattva's* training begins with the immeasurable [states of mind] and ends with great compassion", which is doubtless an abbreviation of a list similar to the one studied below from Mokṣala's *Pañca.* See below p. 791 and n. 1707, noting that the list in Sanskrit (as opposed to Mokṣala's Chinese) begins with *apramāṇa,* and that the last of the eighteen *āveṇikadharmāḥ* is often said to be *mahāmaitrī.* Once more, even though Tib. does not mention **dharmakāya* and, as Harrison suggests, it may well be true that "a gloss has been incorporated in the text", that gloss is significant, and shows that we are dealing here with a clear prototype of ideas of the *dharmakāya* known from elsewhere.

It cannot be insignificant that this understanding is referred to by the same term *fashen* that is also used elsewhere in *Druma* to refer, first, to something in virtue of their participation in which all Buddhas are one, and second, to the Buddha's realisation of the gnosis (both *bodhi* and *jñāna*) in virtue of which he is *buddha.* Under the rubric of this term, therefore, we see, in *Druma,* the coalescence of prototypical versions of three important dimensions of later complex conceptions of *dharmakāya* – embodiment in the "absolute", embodiment in gnosis, and embodiment in *buddhadharmas*. Once again, we must revert to our guiding methodological principle that excessive insistence upon terminological distinction must yield where we can clearly recognise conceptual continuity. Whether Lokakṣema had before him texts that said *dharmadhātu* or *dharmakāya* is far less material than the striking fact that, in whatever terminological guise, we can trace an emergent version of this complex conjunction of concepts at least back to him in his *Druma.* It may well be the case, in fact, that, as we shall see below (§4.3.11) is also the case with the term *dharmatā* (*faxing* 法性) in Mokṣala's *Pañca,* parts of this emergent synthesis were indeed proceeding under the umbrella of the term *dharmadhātu* in the period represented by Lokakṣema's *Druma*; but we should not, for that relatively incidental reason, close our eyes to the fact that the *idea* that was eventually called *dharmakāya* was already well on its way in this text.

Thus, although it is clear, as Harrison shows, that Lokakṣema uses *fashen* where the later Kumārajīva and Tibetan translations have **dharmadhātu,* it certainly cannot be assumed in all cases that *fashen* is therefore simply his "translation" for *dharmadhātu,* or that the passages in question can be divorced entirely from emergent Mahāyāna understandings of *dharmakāya.* Quite the contrary, in fact – close scrutiny of at least some of these passages shows that the Lokakṣema versions clearly reflect a concern with a complex, multidimensional problematic of the Buddha's embodiment, dimensions of which represent important first instances in our

record of the conjunction of a term bespeaking corporeality (*shen* 身) or the more specific notion of embodiment "in *dharma*" (*fashen*) with certain ideas.

The passages we have examined here suggest, therefore, that there may be more of the later *dharmakāya* to Lokakṣema's *fashen* than meets the eye if we examine the question solely through terminological equivalents in later Chinese and Tibetan versions of the texts. On the other hand, as we shall now see, the mere fact that Lokakṣema uses the term *jing* 經 in various contexts, including perhaps the sole instance of **dharmakāya* studied in §4.3.8, does not necessarily mean that there is nothing of the emergent "classic" Mahāyāna notion of the *dharmakāya* in those contexts either, and thus, another of the supports for Harrison's claim that Lokakṣema reflects his "Mainstream" understanding all down the line turns out to be shakier than it first appears.

4.3.10 The interpretation of *jing* 經 as a translation for *dharma* in Lokakṣema

In his survey of other mentions of the term *dharmakāya* in the Lokakṣema corpus, Harrison has also pointed out that *Aṣṭa* passage above (§4.3.8) is not unique in applying the Chinese *jing* 經 to the translation of the term. In other cases, too, we find *jingfa* 經法 . . . 身, which would ordinarily be understood as an embodiment comprising some combination of "scripture" and "*dharma*". In the *Lokânuvartanā-sūtra* (佛說內藏百寶經 T807, hereafter LaN), for example, we find two such instances.[1668] In the *Pratyutpanna-buddha-saṃmukhâvasthita-samādhi-sūtra,*

[1668] Verse 37: "[The Buddha] calls the *jingfa* [his] body," 以經法名爲身 T807.752a18-19; cf. Tib. *de bzhin gshegs pa chos sku yang,*; "[The Buddhas] regard [or take, 以 . . . 爲] *jingfa* as [their] body," 以經法爲身, T807.753a19; cf. Tib. *de bzhin gshegs pa chos sku ste;* Harrison, "Real Phantom Body" 59. As Harrison notes, this Ch. would most likely translate exactly the Skt. found in the extant Skt. *Aṣṭa* 31, *dharmakāyā tathāgatāḥ*; 60.

Lokakṣema translates *jingzangshen* 經藏身, "body of the treasury of scriptures".[1669] Thus, we see that the *Aṣṭa* passage in which Lokakṣema has *jingfashen* where later Sanskrit has *dharmakāya* is part of a larger pattern in his translation idiom, and that whether or not he had the word *dharmakāya* before him in the *Aṣṭa* case, he does indeed seem to regularly used the word *jing* 經 as part of the translation for *dharma-* in *dharmakāya.*

This is part of a broader pattern, whereby Lokakṣema regularly uses *jing* as a part of his translation for *dharma* – a pattern to which Harrison's article arguably pays insufficient attention. When we consider the various senses in which the term *dharma* is apparently meant when Lokakṣema so translates it, however, it becomes apparent that it is dangerous, at best, to read into the presence of Ch. *jing* the significant Harrison wants to attribute to it.

This tendency is so widespread that it will suffice to give only a couple of examples from *Aṣṭa* alone where 經法 is regularly used for **dharma,* though such examples could easily be multiplied. I have chosen these examples to show clearly that *jingfa* here is not always or necessarily compatible with Harrison's reading of *dharma-* in **dharmakāya* in terms of his "Mainstream" interpretation. For example, at the end of Ch. 23, Lokakṣema's text describes the way *prajñāpāramitā* is present indifferently in all *dharmas* (諸經法). This is compared to a boat that ferries all passengers without discrimination; to the earth, which grows all plants without discrimination; to water, which flows to all places without discrimination; to the wind, which blows everywhere without bias; to the sun, which shines equally on all things; and so on.[1670] The point about this passage, for our purposes, is that the term *jingfa* here is used for "all

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[1669] Harrison, "Real Phantom Body" 60; 悉逮得經藏身如虛空無有想, T418.904a18.

[1670] T466c14-467a10. Most of the text here has no close parallels in Skt., though the general idea appears; see Conze, *Eight Thousand* 257-258.

dharmas" in the clear sense of "all the things of the world": *prajñāpāramitā* indifferently "produces" all *dharmas* as the earth produces plants, as the sea produces its treasures, etc.;[1671] it illuminates all *dharmas* as the sun shines equally on all four continents;[1672] it "reaches to" or "permeates" all *dharmas* just as water flows through and steeps all things indifferently;[1673] and it "consummates" or "brings to completion" all *dharmas*, just as the wind blows everywhere without bias (? *sic*).[1674] The sense in which the text here intends "all *dharmas*" is clearly that of "all things" most generally.

Elsewhere, the text states, "There are two things that ensure that a practitioner of *prajñāpāramitā* cannot be obstructed in his path by Māra: first, that he sees all *dharmas* (諸經法) as empty, and second, that he does not abandon a myriad of beings."[1675]

Again, the text clearly uses *jingfa* to refer to a range of other kinds of *dharma*. For example, *jingfa* is still the translation term used when Śakra expresses the wish that the *bodhicitta* of the *bodhisattvas* may "bring to fulfilment in them [all] the *dharmas* of a Buddha, the *dharmas* of

[1671] 般若波羅蜜生諸經法。亦不念言。從中生與不生, T224.466c20-21; 般若波羅蜜悉出生諸經法亦如是, T224.467a06-07.

[1672] 般若波羅蜜悉照諸經法雖爾般若波羅蜜亦無念, T224.466c25-26.

[1673] 般若波羅蜜悉至諸經法。雖爾般若波羅蜜亦無念, T224.466c27-28.

[1674] 般若波羅蜜成就諸經法亦如是, T224.467a01.

[1675] 菩薩有二事法行般若波羅蜜魔不能中道使得便。何謂二事。一者諸經法視皆空。二者不捨十方人悉護。是爲二事, T224.467b17-20. *dvābhyāṁ subhūte dharmābhyāṁ samanvāgato bodhisattvo mahāsattvas tasmin samaye durdharṣo bhavati māraiḥ pāpīyobhir mārakāyikābhir vā devatābhiḥ. katamābhyāṁ dvābhyām. yaduta sarvasattvāś cāsya aparityaktā bhavanti, sarvadharmāś ca anena śūnyatāto vyavalokitā bhavanti,* Vaidya 221.30-32; cf. Conze 260.

sarvajñatā, the *dharmas* of the Tathāgata . . . and also the *dharmas* of non-backsliding."[1676] Once more, in all cases, the translation of *dharmas* is *jingfa.*

These examples could be further multiplied, but to little added effect.[1677] The point for our purposes in these examples is that the sense of "all *dharmas*" (**sarvadharmāḥ*) here is clearly not confined to "all the teaching(s)" nor "all the *buddhadharmas*", even though these are the only two main alternatives envisaged under the aegis of Harrison's "Mainstream" *dharmakāya.* Here, rather, *sarvadharmāḥ* clearly refers variously to a range of meanings. In our first example, it means "all [the] things [of the world]".[1678] This is the same sense in which we would read the term in the Abhidharma context, and indeed, the same sense in which Prajñāpāramitā proclaims that all *dharmas* are empty of self-essence, and so on, as the second example shows. Of course, it is certainly the case that the term can also be used to refer to the Buddha *dharmas,* as in one part of the third example, but even there its range is broader than that, including *avaivartanadharma.*[1679]

For our present purposes, the relevance of these facts is that there is no reason to believe that the word *jingfa,* or words like it, necessarily refers to *dharma* in the sense of "teachings", despite

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[1676] 所願悉成。爲近爲悉護作是行者。爲悉成佛。諸經法薩芸若經法。怛薩阿竭經法。悉具足。阿惟越致經法亦爾, T224.465c10-12. Skt., which does not correspond exactly, reads*: parigṛhītāścittotpādāḥ eteṣām eva buddhadharmāṇāṁ paripūraṇāya bhavantu, eteṣām eva sarvajñatāpratisaṁyuktānāṁ dharmāṇāṁ paripūraṇāya bhavantu, eteṣām eva svayaṁbhūdharmāṇāṁ paripūraṇāya bhavantu, eteṣām eva asaṁhāryadharmāṇāṁ paripūraṇāya bhavantu,* Viadya 215.11-13; cf. Conze, *Eight Thousand* 254.

[1677] See further e.g. T224.467c11-15; 468a11; 468a24; 469a24-27; 224.470a17; most of the ten occurrences at 471b22-c03, etc.

[1678] Note the use of Ch. 萬物 in the comparison to the earth producing "all things" without discrimination; T224.466c19.

[1679] In this case, despite the fact that no term indicating a body occurs, we are in fact, of course, close to an important sense assumed later by the term *dharmakāya.* This includes the Buddha *dharmas,* but once more, the inclusion of *sarvajñatā* points us in the direction of the same embodiment in gnosis that we have examined above in §4.3.2 ff.

the fact that the word *jing* 經 more usually means *sūtra* in Buddhist Chinese.[1680] Of course, this is not to say that the sense of "teachings" is completely excluded; examples can be found,[1681] though they seem in fact to be in the minority of instances of the term *jingfa* in Lokakṣema's *Aṣṭa*. The point is rather that it may be a trick of historical perspective that makes us see sure signs of "the teaching" in Lokakṣema's (possible) translation of **dharmakāya* as *jingfa*. In fact, were we given only the Lokakṣema corpus to go on, without the distorting lens of later Buddhist Chinese to (mis)guide us – as Lokakṣema's original and intended readers almost certainly were – we would most likely more accurately conclude that it had a broader range of meaning, of which "scripture" was only a part – much more like Sanskrit *dharma,* in fact.

If it is thus possible to show that *jingfa* is perfectly compatible with almost the whole range of meanings of the term *dharma,* it is also notable, conversely, that in other passages, where Lokakṣema gives *fashen* 法身(**dharmakāya*) rather than Kumārajīva's *zhufa* for *sarvadharmāḥ,* we also find doctrines that are not at all compatible with Harrison's "Mainstream" understanding of the *dharmakāya* as embodiment in emphatically plural *dharmas* to the exclusion of the unitary metaphysical "absolute", regardless of the terminological vehicle the ideas may be conveyed by. For example, the first passage Harrison cites from *Ajāta* says that *bodhisattvas* "do not deviate from twelvefold causation; they consider the body of *dharmas* (*fashen*) to be neither

[1680] Indeed, this can be shown even of the word *jing* in isolation. Cf., for example, the following passage in Lokakṣema's *Kāśyapaparivarta,* which clearly states that *jing* (**dharma,* **dharmatā* even?) does not come from anywhere or go to anywhere, in a manner closely reminiscent of Thusness: 佛所說經。無所從來去亦無所至, T350.193c23. Pāsādika translates: "The Lord has taught the *dharma* so as to (make understood that) there is neither proceeding to nor coming from anywhere". This section, §145, is missing from the Skt. of Vorobyova-Desyatovskaya.

[1681] Thus 汝悉當持經法教十方天下人, 224.471a21; 叉手白化佛言。願佛爲我說經法。我從佛聞經, T224.471b21-22; possibly 諸佛說經法行道如是, T224.470c04-05; etc.

increasing nor decreasing".[1682] The conjunction here of the term *fashen* with *pratītyasamutpāda*,[1683] alongside the notion of "neither increasing nor decreasing" (cf. Skt. *anūnatvâpūrṇatva,* as in the eponymous proto-Tathāgatagarbha *sūtra;* cf. also the *Aṣṭa* 16 conceit of "neither coming nor going") is if anything redolent of the Mahāyāna "absolute", and not of any conception congruent with Harrison's "Mainstream" *dharmakāya*.

Thus, on the one hand, the use of *jingfa* indicates that it is not always compatible with Harrison's "Mainstream" reading of *dharmakāya,* and on the other hand, *fashen* is used for *sarvadharmāḥ,* for which *jingfa* is also a translation, similarly in contexts where Harrison's "Mainstream" interpretation of "the body of *dharmas* viz. teachings or Buddha qualities" is not the most plausible reading.

We should note, indeed, in this connection, that Harrison also points us to other passages in which not *jingfa* but *fashen* is used for **sarvadharmāḥ* (Tib. *chos thams cad, chos rnams kun* etc.), **buddhadharmāḥ,* "*dharmas*" (*chos* [var. *chos nyid!*]), etc. particularly in *Druma* and *Ajāta.*[1684] Harrison's response to these passages is simply to assume that the plural *dharmas* spoken of are, merely in being plural, compatible with a "Mainstream" understanding. It is much more likely, however, that the fact that Lokakṣema feels able to speak of *fashen* here probably rather indicates that a very different sense of *dharma* is at play here. That this is so can be readily shown by considering what is said about "all *dharmas*" in the various passages we have reviewed. In them, our attention is directed to a dimension of them in which *prajñāpāramitā*

1682 Harrison, "Real Phantom Body" 63: *rten cing 'brel bar 'byung ba dang mi 'gal ba'i phyir des chos thams cad la brtag par bya'o// thog ma nas ma skyes pa'i phyir chos gang yang ma bri ba dang ma 'phel bar bya'o/*

1683 Cf. the MN 28 parallel to the *Vakkali-sutta* pericope stating that "he who sees the Dharma sees the Buddha" wherein "he who sees *pratītyasamutpāda* sees the Dhamma" etc. (see p. 368); also the associations between *pratītyasamutpāda* and relics.

1684 Harrison, "Real Phantom Body" 62 ff.

enters into them all equally; to a dimension in which they neither increase nor decrease; to the dimension in that they are all empty; to a dimension in which they are produced by *prajñāpāramitā*; and so forth. Elsewhere, under the rubric of the same term *fashen,* we have seen that Lokakṣema directs our attention similarly to a dimension of things (called *dharmadhātu* rather than *sarvadharma* in our extant later versions of the texts) equal entry into which renders all the Buddhas one; the realisation of which, in tandem with the realisation of *bodhi* or other gnostic fruits, is key to access to Buddhahood; and so forth. In passages we have not examined here, *Aṣṭa* alone further speaks of a dimension of all *dharmas* (once more, 諸經法) in which they are unarisen (*anutpāda*), "fundamentally inexistent" (本無, apparently Lokakṣema's somewhat opaque equivalent for *tathatā*), and "like *nirvāṇa*".[1685]

Regardless of the vagaries of terminology, then – whether Lokakṣema has predicates these things of **sarvadharmāḥ* or **dharmakāya,* and whether the other extant texts predicate them of **sarvadharmāḥ, *dharmadhātu* or *dharmatā* – the common thread running through all of these statements is that they are all about something quite different from either the Dharma *qua* teaching, or Buddha *dharmas,* and also, even more notably, from the prolific plurality of phenomenal *dharmas* as they are presented to ordinary experience. They are, rather, about the higher or more profound truth of things to which it is the whole object of the Prajñāpāramitā literature to direct our attention, the "absolute" that goes under such a variety of names in that literature. As such, these passages, even though most of them never breathe a whisper of *dharmakāya per se,* are certainly more compatible with the later "classic" Mahāyāna metaphysical understanding of *dharmakāya* than they are with any putative "Mainstream" understanding.

[1685] 諸經法信本無所從生。是菩薩尙未得無所從生法樂。於中立信。諸法本空。是菩薩尙未得阿惟越致信諸經法本無如泥洹, T224.467c12-15.

Though we have perhaps argued the long way around to get to this point, this much should also make it clear that the mere presence of the term *jing* 經 in the sole Lokakṣema passage where the term **dharmakāya* may actually occur (i.e. where Ch. *shen* 身 coincides with *-kāya* in the extant Sanskrit text; see §4.3.8) certainly does not allow us to conclude that Lokakṣema therefore had in mind a putative understanding whereby *jingshen* 經身 probably refers to the scriptures, appearances (conditioned by the later "more usual" use of *jing*) notwithstanding. Far less can we conclude, when we proceed on the basis of an even-handed and broad consideration of the many passages that discuss **sarvadharmāḥ, dharmadhātu,* and perhaps even *dharmatā,* that there is no evidence in the text for a specifically Mahāyāna doctrine of the *dharmakāya* – almost all the elements of that later understanding are present, except (perhaps) the specific corporeal conceit,[1686] though none of them yet travel under the names by which they were later recognised.

In sum, then, it still seems to me that it is not the most likely scenario that the sole instance of *fojingshen* 佛經身 studied in §4.3.8 above represents an underlying Skt. *dharmakāya* at Lokakṣema's stage of the development of the text, and it may indeed be possible, as I suggested there, that it is intended to mean "the corpus of the teachings of the Buddha". However, this

[1686] I must specify here exactly what I mean. Obviously *some kind* of corporeal conceit is present in Lokakṣema's insistence on translating whatever terms underlie his various *fashen* by the Ch. for "body". In the context of the many components that were to later contribute to the "classic" notion of the *dharmakāya,* whose presence I have demonstrated here, and further, in the context of his insistence on a rich range of other notions of Buddha embodiments, which I showed in *Aṣṭa* in earlier portions of this section on Prajñāpāramitā, it will surely be very difficult to maintain that this choice of translation terminology is insignificant, or bespeaks no hint of the coming Mahāyāna problematic of embodiments more generally. But one key element is still missing that must make us draw short of ascribing a conceit of embodiment to his use of the term *fashen* – nowhere does he clearly speak of *fashen* as of the Buddha, in the same context where he also speaks of it in terms that clearly match the "classic" metaphysical reading, and thus, we would be going too far were we to claim that he speaks directly of *the Buddha* as *embodied in* the "absolute".

passage is shown by broader and more careful study of the texts to be a relatively insignificant part of the overall evidence for twin problems of Lokakṣema's use of the term *fashen,* on the one hand, and the already emerging notion of the Mahāyāna "absolute" on the other, and the conjunction between them. As we have seen in the last four subsections of this dissertation (§ 4.3.7-4.3.10), the "absolute" was clearly already an important concept at this stage; the Buddhas, if they were not yet overtly identified with it, were already understood as being like it in important respects; significant attention was paid to articulating the relation of this "absolute" to all *dharmas,* and to directing the attention of practitioners (and aspiring Buddhas) to the "absolute" as it inheres in all *dharmas,* or as all *dharmas* participate in it; and, in Lokakṣema at least, for reasons we cannot entirely understand, this dimension of all *dharmas* was sometimes spoken of under the apparently corporeal name of *fashen* 法身(**dharmakāya*). Most of the key components of the later "classic" Mahāyāna metaphysical notion of the *dharmakāya* as the embodiment of the Buddha in or as *dharmatā* were therefore already floating in the mix, though nowhere do they quite come together in one place. For this reason only, we must agree conditionally with Harrison that the metaphysical concept of *dharmakāya* is not yet found in Lokakṣema, though we cannot accept his claim that all is comprehensible in terms of a putative "Mainstream" understanding of *dharmakāya.*

The remaining question, of course, is when these all these floating elements *do* come together, that is, when this "classical" concept of *dharmakāya* can first be seen to coalesce in the early history of the Prajñāpāramitā literature. As we will now see, this development was not far over the horizon, and was certainly to ensue within a century or so, at the most, of Lokakṣema's era. It is therefore certainly not possible to follow Harrison in imagining that nothing incompatible with his "Mainstream" *dharmakāya* is found even right through to the (apparently very late) Sanskrit version of the text.

4.3.11 Towards the *dharmakāya* as embodiment in the absolute in the Prajñāpāramitā literature: Mokṣala's *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā*

Thus far, in this section of this dissertation, we have focussed primarily on the Lokakṣema version of *Aṣṭa,* as our earliest extant reliably datable Prajñāpāramitā text. I have devoted quite some energy to examining a representative portion of the things the text has to say about various embodiments of the Buddha, in order to show that despite the absence in it of any of the better known *terms* for the best-recognised embodiments of the Buddha, the text nonetheless contains a rich conception of multiple forms in which Buddhas are embodied, and the mutual relations among most of these embodiments.

The precedent of Lokakṣema's *Aṣṭa* leads us reasonably to expect, in my opinion, that were we to trace the full range of conceptions of embodiment in similar detail through the later history of the Prajñāpāramitā literature, we would probably find that similarly rich and varied conceptions of embodiment are at play in later texts in that literature. From the examples we have already examined above, we could also reasonably expect that passages setting forth doctrines of embodiment would continue to be a site of significant doctrinal creativity throughout the eight centuries of textual development documented for us by the Chinese record from Lokakṣema to the Song translations, and in the indeterminate historical and cultural *milieu* represented by the extant Sanskrit texts. Such a full study of conceptions of embodiment through all the Prajñāpāramitā literature, however, obviously lies beyond the scope of the present project. For this reason, we will here shift methodological gears, and adopt quite a different tack for the remainder of this section, in keeping with a rather different goal.

My goal in the remainder of this section of this dissertation is to trace, in sketch form only, developments in the early Prajñāpāramitā literature that lead towards the introduction of what I have above called the "classical" conception of *dharmakāya,* that is, a conception in which the *dharma* in which the Buddha is embodied is something like *dharmatā,* that is, a kind of metaphysical or realisational absolute, variously characterised. I will trace these developments only until it is clear that such a conception of *dharmakāya* is indeed present in the texts, and I will then leave its subsequent development for future research. In keeping with this limited goal, I will focus my attention here only on passages directly relevant to that particular conception of embodiment *per se*. I will also not restrict my attention to the various versions of *Aṣṭa,* as I have in earlier parts of this section, but rather, will draw heavily from the two versions of the *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā-sūtra* (hereafter *Pañca*) translated in the second half of the third century by Dharmarakṣa (286 C.E.) and Mokṣala (291 C.E.) respectively. This is in part because Chinese versions of *Aṣṭa* feature the term *dharmakāya* so little, and in part because I will be following a strict chronological order, but after the *Aṣṭa* of Zhi Qian in 225 C.E. (which, as we shall see, is of little relevance for the specific question that concerns us here), no further translation of *Aṣṭa* was made until Zhu Fonian in 382.

The development of the idea that the Buddha is embodied in *dharma* (*dharmakāya*) in the sense that he is to be identified with *dharmatā* is traceable at least to the third century. In Mokṣala's translation of the text, many of the ideas elsewhere or later associated with notions of the *dharmakāya* appear, but not yet under the overt name of *dharmakāya,* but rather under the rubric of *dharmatā.* Even in Mokṣala, however, the identification between *dharmakāya* and *dharmatā* has already clearly been made. In later phases of textual history, we see the broadening application of this conceptual innovation, as the term *dharmakāya* comes to be applied in more and more passages where it clearly refers to such an embodiment in the

absolute. Once more, however, if we are overly fixated on tracing only the history of the term *dharmakāya,* we will be led to overlook important parts of the development of the idea in question. In the following, therefore, we will look at several representative passages from Mokṣala's *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā,* where we see different aspects of the emergence of this understanding, almost as if it is in process.

In Chapter 89, "Dharmodgata" (法上品),[1687] we see the overt statement that the Buddha is to be identified with *dharmatā,* which statement is contrasted further with the mistaken idea that one could seek him in his *rūpakāya.*

This statement comes in the context of a clear elaboration of the nature of the Mahāyāna "absolute", which is spoken of already in Mokṣala by an impressive variety of aliases: as *tathatā* (如如, "thusness"), the "unmoving" (不動搖, *acalitā),* "non-production" (不生, *yaś ca anutpādaḥ*), *bhūtakoṭi* (the "limit of what exists" or "limit of the real" 真際), *śūnyatā* (虛空, "emptiness"), *paramārtha* (真諦, not paralleled in Sanskrit), "the unconditioned" (無爲, **asaṃskṛta,* not paralleled in Sanskrit), and cessation (滅盡, *nirodha*).[1688] Of each of these synonyms or epithets for Thusness etc., it is said in turn (a) that it is identical with the Tathāgata;[1689] and (b) that it

[1687] Corresponding to Ch. 31 of the Sanskrit *Aṣṭa,* Conze *Eight Thousand* 291 ff.; Ch. 86 of *Aṣṭadaśasāhasrikā;* not found in extant Skt. *Pañca,* but in Tib.; not found in *Śatasāhasrikā;* not found in Dharmarakṣa's partial translation. See Conze, *Praj. Lit.,* 45.

[1688] T221.145a11-19; Vaidya 253.3-11; Conze, *Eight Thousand* 291. For Kumārajīva's version compare T223.421b26-c08. Some epithets or synonyms of the "absolute" provided in the Sanskrit are missing in Mokṣala's Chinese: *yathāvattā, virāga, ākāśadhātu*.

[1689] The translation in each case is not exactly parallel, but representative forms are 如來者如如; 不生者是如來; 真際者則如來 etc., for Skt. *yā ca tathatā, sa tathāgataḥ* etc.

does not "come or go" (亦無來亦無去, *na . . . āgacchati vā gacchati vā* etc.). The burden of the passage as a whole is that the Tathāgatas, also, do not "come or go".[1690]

Thus, already in Mokṣala's version of the text, the Tathāgata is identified with a whole slew of other appellations or epithets for the "absolute". In the Mokṣala version of the text, we do not yet see the use of the term *dharmakāya* to express this notion. Nonetheless, it seems impossible to me to ignore the fact that we are here already in the presence of most of the components of the "classic" Mahāyāna interpretation of that term, whereby the Buddha is "embodied" in this "absolute", in all *but* the name.

We should note, in passing, that the articulation of this concept is closely linked with, and indeed seems to be centrally directed towards, the assertion that the Buddhas do not "come and go", are "unmoving" etc. We will see below, when we examine the gradual emergence of the idea that Buddhas or Tathāgatas can be or are in fact immortal, and eventually, that they are embodied in immortal forms, that important watersheds in the development of that understanding can be observed in the record around the same time as the emergence of the ideas we see here in Mokṣala. I will suggest there that these developments are most likely related. We can potentially understand these relationships in either direction. The emergence of a metaphysical-Buddhalogical understanding whereby the eternity of the Buddha can be conceptually justified (or indeed, may become a conceptual necessity) through his identification with the enduring and unchanging true nature of all things may have prepared the ground for or motivated the emergence of the notion of the Buddha's immortality and immortal embodiment. Conversely, if the notion of the Buddha's immortality was also

[1690] 諸如來常不動搖。亦不去亦不來。如來者如如無所起滅。不起者亦不來亦不去, T221.145a12-13; the Sanskrit of the *Aṣṭa* parallel reads *na khalu kulaputra tathāgatāḥ kutaś cid āgacchanti vā gacchanti vā. acalitā hi tathatā. yā ca tathatā, sa tathāgataḥ*, Vaidya 253.3-4.

emerging in some quarters under the motivation or various other pressures, it may have been a factor encouraging the development of Buddhalogy in this new, metaphysical direction. It is most likely that we are confronted here with a complex, even feedback relation of mutual causation, and that both developments may be common parts of an even larger set of trends in Buddhist conceptual development overall. However we understand their relations, however, it is unlikely that these various developments in the understanding of the embodiment of the Buddha were unrelated.

For our present purposes, it is most significant that this understanding is already articulated against an idea that one might identify the Buddha with a **rūpakāya;* the question of how the Buddha is (most veritably) *embodied* is already present. Immediately following the above passage, the text gives the analogy of an ignorant man (*pṛthagjana*) in the desert, who sees a mirage and expects to find water there. The water never exists in the first place, and thus it cannot "come or go". The analogy is then applied to the case of the Tathāgata:

> "All false conceits of arising, such as, namely, that the Tathāgatas come or go, are equally no different from the case of this *pṛthagjana*. What is the reason for this? The Tathāgata cannot be seen by means of his *rūpakāya* ('body of form').[1691] The Tathāgata is identical with *dharmatā*, and *dharmatā* does not come or go. In this same manner, the Tathāgatas do not come or go."[1692]

Thus, already in Mokṣala, we have the identification of the Tathāgata with the absolute; the implicit identification of all the other terms for this absolute with *dharmatā* (by the parallel application of the formula "does not come and does not go"); and, in conjunction with this identification, the relation to a corporeal problematic, as expressed in the possibility that an

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[1691] Note that a prototype to this pericope, if one worded vaguely enough that it is impossible to be sure exactly how to take it, seems to be found as early as Lokakṣema in his *Ajāta*: 見諸佛不想色求。所以者何, T626.390b28-29; cited in Harrison, "Real Phantom Body" 64.

[1692] 諸有起想。謂諸如來有往來者。亦是凡夫與彼無異。所以者何。莫以色身而觀如來。如來者法性。法性者亦不來亦不去。諸如來亦如是無來無去, T221.145a28-b02.

ignorant person might mistakenly identify him with his *rūpakāya.* All that is lacking in order for the "classic" Mahāyāna metaphysical conception of *dharmakāya* to be complete is the name. And indeed, in this precise locus, by the time we get to Kumārajīva's version of the same text, *dharmatā* has been replaced by *dharmakāya*:

> "If there were someone who imagined that it is possible for the Buddhas to come or go, you should know that this person would be a fool. What is the reason for this? O son of good family, <u>the Buddhas cannot be seen by means of the *rūpakāya.* The Buddhas are embodied in *dharma*</u> (*dharmakāyās tathāgatāḥ*), and do not come or go."[1693]

This is also the version of the sentence that we find in our extant Sanskrit *Aṣṭa* parallel to the same passage.[1694]

In light of its context in the argument identifying the Tathāgatas with all the absolute by this range of other names, it seems impossible to me to deny that this passage indeed expresses very clearly the "classic" Mahāyāna metaphysical understanding of *dharmakāya,* and that all that is lacking in the Mokṣala version is the term *dharmakāya* itself. This reading of the passage imposes itself upon us with clarity and force, and it is especially significant that the term *dharmakāya* is applied in the Kumārajīva and Sanskrit readings thereof *in substitution for an earlier version reading dharmatā.* In light of these facts, it is all the more inexplicable to me that Paul Harrison maintains, in the face of the fact that the parallel passage in the Skt. *Aṣṭa* even

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1693 若有人分別諸佛有來有去。當知是人皆是愚夫。何以故。善男子。諸佛不可以色身見。諸佛法身無來無去, T223.421c08-17.

1694 *na hi tathāgato rūpakāyato draṣṭavyaḥ. dharmakāyās tathāgatāḥ. na ca kulaputra dharmatā āgacchati vā gacchati vā;* Vaidya 253.24-25. Lewis Lancaster has already shown quite clearly, in his comparative table of six instances of the term *dharmakāya* in the extant Sanskrit *Aṣṭa*, that this is the only one that appears in any Chinese version of the text prior to Xuanzang. Otherwise, the term only ever appears in Xuanzang (two instances) or Dānapāla (four instances), and in two instances, the Sanskrit *dharmakāya* is in fact not paralleled in any Chinese version of the text at all; Lancaster diss., 98-100. However, Lancaster is incorrect, it seems, when he says that his "Dharma-kāya Passage 2" is paralleled in Dānapāla. He gives T228.601 line 18, with no register, but he must be referring to 601c18, which corresponds to the Skt. As I have already noted above, there is in fact nothing in Dānapāla that corresponds to this supposed citation from another source (which Harrison takes to be "Mainstream"). See Lancaster 98, above p. 724. I have here corrected Lancaster's figures accordingly.

uses the word *dharmakāya* here, that "even in the late Sanskrit text of the *AsPP* (= *Aṣṭa*) . . . *dharmakāya* . . . is perfectly comprehensible in terms of the multivalent Mainstream interpretation of the word."[1695] For Harrison, of course, the putative "Mainstream" interpretation precisely excludes what I am here calling the "metaphysical" application of the term.[1696]

I have analysed this passage as evincing the "classic" Mahāyāna metaphysical concept of *dharmakāya* in all but name. In Mokṣala's Chapter 44, however, even the application of the name of *dharmakāya* to *dharmatā* is already found.

> "Moreover, O Subhūti, *prajñāpāramitā* does not maintain that there is anything in the *dharmas* of the *pṛthagjana* to give away or to abandon; [so too for] . . . the *dharmas* of the Arhat . . . the *dharmas* of the Pratyekabuddha . . . the *dharmas* of the Buddha . . . *prajñāpāramitā* does not maintain that there is anything in conditioned *dharmas* (*sic*) to give away or to abandon, nor in unconditioned *dharmas.* The reason for this is that whether or not the Buddhas arise in the world (*utpādād vā tathāgatānām anutpādād vā tathāgatānāṃ*), *dharmatā* remains as it ever did (*sthitaivaiṣā . . . dharmatā*); and this *dharmatā* is the *dharmakāya* (法性者則是法身). [1697]

[1695] Harrison, "Real Phantom Body" 57.

[1696] Harrison's first argument against the "metaphysical" reading of the present passage is that the *dharmakāya,* understood in the metaphysical sense, could not be plural,49; as he explains, it is meaningless to think of "more than one" absolute, 48. But Harrison's own persuasive argument that the term *dharmakāya* here is to be read as a *bahuvrīhi* renders this objection forceless, since the plural of *dharmakāyāḥ* clearly modifies the plural of *tathāgatāḥ*, "the Tathāgatas have *dharma/s* for their body", and need not mean anything for the grammatical number of the uninflected *dharma-* as it enters into the compound. Harrison implicitly admits as much when he appeals to Sarvâstivādin sources in order to determine whether we "should . . . translate it [*dharma*] in the singular, as is customary, or in the plural", 55. Finally, however, when Harrison ends his treatment of the present passage, he himself treats *dharma* as singular, and further smuggles *dharmatā* back in while disguising the fact by speaking of it as the nature of plural *dharmas*, glossing the passage to say, "Just as coming and going cannot be predicated of *dharma* itself, or of the nature of *dharma*(*s*) (*dharmatā*), it cannot be predicated of the Buddhas insofar as they are identified with the (*sic*) *dharma*", 52. He fails to notice, too, that this statement only makes sense if applied to *dharmatā*, but not to "the *dharma*", if by that term we mean, as he would have it, the teachings; it is a well-known fact that Buddhist texts frequently envisage the possibility that "*the* Dharma" does indeed "come and go" from the world, and indeed that the fading of the teaching of one Buddha from the world is a precondition for the appearance of the next in the cosmic cycle.

[1697]復次須菩提。般若波羅蜜者。亦不持羅漢法有所與亦不棄凡人法。亦不持辟支佛法有所與亦不棄羅漢法。亦不持佛法有所與亦不棄辟支佛法。亦不持佛法有所與有所棄。須菩提。般若波羅蜜。亦不持無爲法有所與亦不棄有爲法。何以故。有佛無佛法性住如故。法性者則是法身, T221.67c14-21. There seems to be a problem with Mokṣala's text here, which literally reads, for each item in the sequence, " . . . does not maintain that there is anything in the Arhat *dharmas* to be given away, nor does

Thus, in this passage, Mokṣala's version of *Pañca* overtly states the equivalence of *dharmatā* and *dharmakāya* which was only implied in the passage from Chapter 89 with which we began.[1698]

Another passage, which I only need to mention briefly, further confirms that *dharmatā* is being used in a sense clearly congruent with the "classic" Mahāyāna metaphysical notion of the *dharmakāya,* though here, once more, it does so in all but name. In this passage, the old *Vakkali* conceit that "to see the *dharma* is to see the Buddha" is expanded to specifically hold that this means seeing *dharmatā:*

> "How may the *bodhisattva* be blessed with vision of (奉見)the Buddhas? By means of seeing *dharma*; this is seeing the Buddha. How does the *bodhisattva* truly see the Buddha's body? By means of *dharmatā*; this is the true sight."[1699]

Once more, in the Kumārajīva and Sanskrit versions of the text, the passage has been modified to include the term *dharmakāya* in place of *dharmatā.*[1700]

Elsewhere in the text again, once more without any overt mention of the term *dharmakāya, dharmatā* is further discussed in terms that reveal hints of another aspect of the process of

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it abandon the *pṛthagjanadharmas*; does not maintain there is anything in the *pratyekabuddhadharmas* to be given away, nor does it abandon the Arhat *dharmas*" etc. I cannot understand what idea the text might want to convey by this, and nor does it match the Sanskrit: *sā khalu punar iyaṃ subhūte prajñāpāramitā na buddhadharmāṇāṃ dāyikā vā cchorikā vā, na pṛthagjanadharmāṇāṃ dāyikā vā cchorikā vā, na śrāvakapratyekabuddhadharmāṇāṃ dāyikā vā cchorikā vā, nāpi buddhadharmāṇāṃ dāyikā vā cchorikā vā, na saṃskṛtadhātor dāyikā vā cchorikā vā. tat kasya hetor. utpādād vā tathāgatānām anutpādād vā tathāgatānāṃ sthitaivaiṣā dharmāṇāṃ dharmatā dharmadhātur dharmasthititā dharmaniyāmatā,* Kimura, *Pañca* II-III, 184. For this reason, my translation reflects a compromise between the general intent of the Sanskrit and Mokṣala's precise wording. Note, however, that this textual problem does not touch on the sentence of most concern for us here; the identification of *dharmatā* with *dharmakāya* is crystal clear and beyond doubt.

1698 Note that this statement of equivalence is *not* found in our present extant Sanskrit.

1699 云何菩薩奉見諸佛以見法故是爲見佛。云何菩薩真見佛身。逮法性故是爲真見, T221.29a26-28.

1700 云何菩薩如實觀佛身。如實觀法身故, T223.259b08; *iyaṃ bodhisattvasya mahāsattvasya tatra kathaṃ bodhisattvena mahāsattvena buddhakāyayathābhūtapratyavekṣaṇatā. yā dharmakāyayathābhūtaprayavekṣaṇatā,* Dutt 244.2-3.

coalescence between concepts of *dharmakāya* and *dharmatā* in this text. In this extended passage from Mokṣala's Chapter 79, we see the same opposition between *dharmatā* and *rūpakāya* that we have already seen above in Chapter 89; here, however, it seems that *dharmatā* is being associated not with a prototypical version of the emergent understanding of *dharmakāya* as embodiment the absolute, but rather, with notions also found elsewhere of the *dharmakāya* as embodiment in special *buddhadharmas.*

This passage, unlike the passage with which we began, is further one in which the problematic of embodiment features in Mokṣala's version of the text alone among all the extant versions available to us, seemingly evidencing an application of the conceit of embodiment to a locus in the text where it was later abandoned. It is of further interest because it attests to the fact that we are here dealing with the problematic of embodiment in a somewhat indirect manner and, arguably, thereby constitutes even more convincing evidence that embodiment is indeed the issue than the mere use of words for "body" (though such words also feature).

As in all versions of the text, the passage in question poses the problem of a potential danger of antinomianism opened up by the identity of *dharmatā* and all *dharmas.* Essentially, the question boils down to this: if *dharmatā* is the object to be realised, and it is identical with all *dharmas,* then surely it is already realised in all *dharmas,* including worldly or defiled ones, and there is no need to practice. In the Mokṣala version, however, uniquely among all the versions of the text available to me,[1701] this question is posed specifically in the terms of the contrast between *dharmatā* and *rūpakāya.* Mokṣala has Subhūti pose his question thus:

[1701] According to Conze, the passage concerned is supposed to have broad correspondences in a number of texts: the *Śatasāhasrikā* and the *Aṣṭadaśasāhasrikā* as well as *Pañca* itself; See the table in Conze, *Praj. Lit.* 44, which shows it corresponds to *Abhisamayâlaṃkāra* VIII 5, 3. However, we have easy access to no true Sanskrit parallel to Mokṣala's passage here. When Conze translates corresponding text in his *Large Sutra,* 595, he works from parallel passages in the Gilgit ms. of the *Aṣṭadaśasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā* (the *Perfection of Wisdom in 18,000 Lines*); Conze, *Large Sutra* ix. It appears from his translation, however, that the text

"If the Bodhisattva, who studies *prajñāpāramitā* and courses in *prajñāpāramitā,* knows these *dharmas* individually and distinctly in this manner,[1702] will this not therefore cause him to fail to distinguish between *dharmatā* and the *rūpakāya*?"[1703]

This leads to the following exposition:

"The Buddha replied, 'Only if there were any distinct *dharmas* separate from *dharmatā* would there be a difference between *rūpakāya* and *dharmatā.* [However,] O Subhūti, the Tathāgata and his disciples do not hold the view that any *dharmas* are separate from *dharmatā,* or are different from *dharmatā.* Although they do not hold such a view, neither do they dwell in the dualism of existence or inexistence of *dharmas* separate

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there differs significantly from Mokṣala's version. Corresponding portions of the text in the Sanskrit *Pañca* itself seem never to have been published (Conze, *Praj. Lit.,* 34-35, 36, 44; Dutt's published edition covers only the first *abhisamaya*); neither have the corresponding portions of the massive *Śatasāhasrikā;* Conze, *Praj. Lit.,* 31, 44. The partial Dharmarakṣa translation does not include the present chapter; Conze, *Praj. Lit.,* 35. This means that aside from the present version, we have only Kumārajīva's translation to compare, T223.399c10- 400b01. This version of the text is closer than the parallel in the Sanskrit *Aṣṭadaśasāhasrikā* as translated by Conze, and this is of some help in reading specific aspects of the passage; but in the aspect that most concerns us here, that is, the opposition between **rūpakāya* and *dharmatā,* Kumārajīva also does not agree with Mokṣala. The portion of the MPPŚ commentary on this passage (T1509.692a18-c07; not included in Lamotte's monumental but partial translation) is, unsurprisingly, based upon a version of the text that agrees with Kumārajīva's separate translation of the root text, and similarly does not bear on the aspect of the text that most interests us in Mokṣala. The Mokṣala version of the text is thus the only witness we have to this particular way of understanding the problem, and my translation here, since I had no parallels to rely on, is correspondingly tentative.

[1702] That is, he knows the five *skandhas,* the twelve *āyatana,* the eighteen *dhātu,* the four noble truths, the twelve members of the chain of *pratītyasamutpāda* etc. as all having no essence as such, as insubstantial, as like a mirage, how they are produced and stopped, as neither production nor stopping, and so forth; see Conze, *Large Sutra* 594-595.

[1703] 須菩提白佛言。菩薩學般若波羅蜜行般若波羅蜜。假令各各分別知是諸法如是。則爲不分別法性色身, T221.129c17-19. The very question is phrased quite differently in the parallel versions of the text available to us. Thus, in Kumārajīva, "If the *bodhisattva-mahāsattva,* when he courses in *prajñāpāramitā,* knows *dharmas* individually and distinctly [in this manner,], will [this not lead to a situation where] the nature of form (色性, **rūpatā*?!) will destroy *dharmatā,* and where the nature of [all doctrinal categories and instances] through to **sarvajñatā* will destroy *dharmatā*? 若菩薩摩訶薩行般若波羅蜜時。各各分別知諸法。將無以色性壞法性乃至一切種智性壞法性耶, T223.399c11-13. This might make us suspect that in Mokṣala *seshen* is somehow a translation for *rūpaskandha*, and that *rūpaskandha* is being used as a synecdoche for the whole range of doctrinal categories beginning with the *skandhas* and ending with the most exalted salvific ideals; but this cannot be so, since Mokṣala translates the five *skandhas* 五陰 (e.g. further on in this very passage, T221.129b25), and applies this term to each *skandha* individually (色陰痛陰想陰行陰識陰, 4c21-22), but never uses the term *seshen* in this meaning.

In Conze's translation of the parallel from *Aṣṭadaśasāhasrikā,* the question is merely, "If the Bodhisattva, who courses in perfect wisdom, wisely knows the mutually separated *dharmas* in this manner, would not thereby the realm of Dharma be upset?"

from *dharmatā* (? 雖不見不處法無有二離法性者[1704]).' The Buddha said [further?] to Subhūti, 'Thus should a *bodhisattva* who courses in *prajñāpāramitā* study *dharmatā*.'

Subhūti said to the Buddha, 'O World-Honoured One, 'Then, is it the case that a *bodhisattva* who studies *dharmatā* has nothing to study?'

The Buddha said to Subhūti, 'A *bodhisattva* who studies *dharmatā* thereby exhausts the study of all *dharmas*, because all *dharmas* are exactly *dharmatā*.'

Subhūti asked the Buddha, 'Why is this?'

[The Buddha replied,][1705] 'All conditioned *dharmas* are *dharmatā,* and thus, O Subhūti, a *bodhisattva* who courses in *prajñāpāramitā* is one who studies *dharmatā*.'[1706]

Subhūti said to the Buddha, 'If all *dharmas* are *dharmatā,* for what reasons does the *bodhisattva* practise the six perfections? Why does he practise[1707] the four *dhyānas,* the four measureless states of mind (四等, **apramāṇa*), and the four formless concentrations (四空定, **arūpyasamāpatti*[1708])?[1709] Why does he practise the thirty-

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[1704] The Kumārajīva parallel is of little help here: "Because no [*dharma* separate from *dharmatā*] is to be found, [we] do not say that there are *dharmas* outside of *dharmatā;*" 不可得故不說法性外有法, T223.399c16-17.

[1705] The text does not mark the change of speaker, but it can be inferred from the vocative address to Subhūti immediately following. It is also possible that "Subhūti asked the Buddha" (須菩提白佛言) is a corruption in the text, and that the speaker is the Buddha all along. In *Aṣṭadaśasāhasrikā* as translated by Conze and in Kumārajīva, there is no change of speaker at all after Subhūti's first question.

[1706] Cf. Kumārajīva, "All *dharmas* are included in the nature of the *alakṣaṇa* and the *asaṃskṛta*, and it is for this reason that the study of *dharmatā* is the study of all *dharmas;*" 一切法皆入無相無爲性中。以是因緣故學法性則學一切法, T223.399c23-24.

[1707] Although the present portion of the text is not extant in any published Sanskrit edition, the Sanskrit for many of the various terms in the list can be accurately determined on the basis the similar lists found at Kimura, *Pañca* II-III, 183-184, where the text speaks of *prajñāpāramitā* being neither a "giver" (*dāyikā*) nor an "abandoner" (*chorikā*) of various things: the list includes, of the items found here, *apramāṇadhyānārūpyasamāpatt*[*ayaḥ*], *aṣṭā*[*ḥ*] *vimokṣā*[*ḥ*], *navanupūrvavihārasamāpatt*[*ayaḥ*], *ṣa*[*ṭ*] *abhijñā*[*ḥ*], *daś*[*a*] *bodhisattvabhūm*[*ayaḥ*], *daś*[*a*] *tathāgatabal*[*āni*]*, smṛtyupasthān*[*āḥ*], and *aṣṭādaśa āveṇikā*[*ḥ*] *buddhadharmā*[*ḥ*].

[1708] See Soothill, s.v. *si kongding* 四空定.

[1709] Together these items comprise a list of twelve *dhyāna* states, otherwise sometimes known as 四諦四禪四等四無色定, T1547.439a12-13, T1543.894a02 etc.; 四禪四等心四無色定, T598.137a04-05, etc.; 四禪 . . . 四無量四空定, T1509.97a01-04; etc. The parallel in Kumārajīva's *Pañca* provides us with individual names of the items in the second and third sets of four, respectively: 慈悲喜捨 (=四等) . . . . 無邊虛空處無邊識處無所有處非有想非無想處 (=四空定), T223.399c29-400a01. The exact details of these states need not concern us here. The listing of these three sets of four states together seems to be old in Abhidharma literature, dating back at least to the *Dharmaskandha;* see Frauwallner, *Studies in Abhidharma Literature* 16 (items 11-13 in the numbered list of the text's contents).

seven members of enlightenment (三十七道品, *bodhipakṣikādharmāḥ*),[1710] the three "gates to liberation" (三脫門, *trīṇi vimokṣamukhāni*),[1711] the eight kinds of liberation (八惟無, *vimokṣa*),[1712] the nine graduated *dhyānas* (九次第禪, **navânupūrvasamāpattayaḥ*),[1713] the ten powers (*daśabala*), and the four confidences? For what reason does he study the eighteen (*āveṇika*) *dharmas* of a Buddha? [For what reason does he] study the six *abhijñā*,[1714] or the thirty-two marks [of a superman] ([*mahāpuruṣa-*]*lakṣaṇāni*); or study the perfection of the eighty minor marks (*anuvyañajanāni*)? Why does he study rebirth into the four assemblies (四姓家), study rebirth into the assembly of the four heavenly kings (生四天上), and [ascent] from the fourth heaven to the thirty-third heaven?[1715]

[1710] Once more, Kumārajīva opts to itemise these: 四念處四正勤四如意足五根五力七覺分八聖道分, T223.400a01-03. On this list, see Gethin, *Buddhist Path to Awakening*.

[1711] Kumārajīva: 空無相無作解脫門, T223.400a03.

[1712] 八惟無, Mokṣala's translation term for the "eight liberations" (*aṣṭāvimokṣa*). The *Yiqie jing yin yi* 一切經音義 defines this term as an equivalent of the 八惟務 or the 八背捨: 八惟無、或作八惟務即八背捨也, T2128.357c12. These terms all refer to the "eight liberations", 八解脫, which are defined in the *Fa men ming yi ji* 法門名義集, T2124.197a14-b02. See also DDB s.v. *ba jietuo* 八解脫. Further on the eight liberations, see interesting comments in Bronkhorst, *Two Traditions* 80-82, and 80 n. 5 for a list of canonical loci; see also Lamotte, *Traité* 1281-1283.

[1713] Also known e.g. as the 九次第定, T1509.97a04, i.e. the four *dhyānas,* the four *ārūpyasamāpatti,* and the *nirodhasamāpatti.*

[1714] Kumārajīva: 六神通, T223.400a05.

[1715] Elsewhere, 四姓家 refers to the four castes of Indic society: e.g. 家者。四姓家。刹利家。婆羅門家。毘舍家。首陀羅家, T1425.399a09-11. Here, however, it seems most likely that the overall rubric referred to is part of a rubric of "eight assemblies" in which a *bodhisattva* preaches the *dharma,* as featured in the Pāli MPNS: DN 16, 3.21, "Ānanda, these eight [kinds of] assemblies. What are they? They are the assemblies of Khattiyas, the assembly of Brahmins, the assembly of householders, the assembly of ascetics; the assembly of devas of the Realm of the Four Great Kings; the assembly of the Thirty-Three Gods; the assembly of *māras*; the assembly of Brahmās;" Walshe 248: *aṭṭha kho imā ānanda parisā. katamā aṭṭha. khattiyaparisā brāhmaṇaparisā gahapatiparisā samaṇaparisā cātummahārājikaparisā tāvatiṃsaparisā māraparisā brahmaparisā*. Elsewhere in this same present text, the Bodhisattva vows to convert the merit of his *dāna* to being reborn in the four castes: 菩薩發道意不作是念。我持布施當生四姓家。諸所施已攝取眾生者。皆令至無餘泥洹而般泥洹, T221.126b02-04. In a Chinese version of the MPNS, rebirth into this same set of destinies is found as part of a list of benefits that follow upon the worship of relics for sentient beings, when the Buddha explains that he chose to smash his *vajra*-like body into smithereens like mustard-seeds in order that his *dharma* might last long in the world, and sentient beings thereby have the opportunity to win merit: those who offer to the relics 當生四姓家・四天王家・三十三天・豔天・兜術天・化自在天・他化自 在天。因此福祐。當生欲界・色界・無色界 etc.; they also win the four fruits of the monastic life, etc., T125.751a09-19. In the present case, also, the 四姓家 is part of such a list of desirable destinies; it is therefore unlikely that the 四姓家 would include Vaiśyas and Śudras, and more likely that it refers to Kṣatriyas, Brahmins, householders and ascetics, as in these other passages. This conjecture is supported by the Kumārajīva parallel, which typically itemises the list rather than merely giving the overall numerical rubric, but, however, only gives three items (Kṣatriya, Brahmin, householders): 刹利大姓婆羅門大姓居士大家, T223.400a06-07. It also, however, gives a much more detailed list of heavens, which further extends beyond the Mokṣala list into the Brahmanā heavens after the manner of the MPNS list, and then even into the higher *dhyāna* heavens: 何以學生四天王天處

Why does he [traverse the path] from the first awakening of resolve [to attain buddhahood, *bodhicittôtpāda*] to the tenth stage? Why does he study the three vehicles, the pure Buddha-lands, and the conversion of sentient beings? Why does he study *dhāraṇīs*[1716] and eloquence? Why does he study the *bodhisattva* path?[1717] Why does he study the thusness of all *dharmas* (諸法如), and [must he] know all of a myriad of things (一切眾事)?[1718] If none of these various distinctions exist in *dharmatā* (性中無有是若干分數),[1719] O World-Honoured One, [then] there would be no *bodhisattva* who would engage in misdirected ("deluded", **viparyāsa*) acts (行顛倒事), because it is at once true that *dharmatā* is not the five *skandhas,* but also that *dharmatā* is not distinct from the five *skandhas*; *dharmatā* is thus identical with the five *skandhas,* and the five *skandhas* are identical with *dharmatā.*'

The Buddha said to Subhūti, 'Exactly, Subhūti, it is just as you say. *Dharmatā* is the five *skandhas,* and the five *skandhas* are *dharmatā.* Subhūti, if a *bodhisattva* who courses in *prajñāpāramitā* holds to the view that there are *dharmas* separate from *dharmatā,* he will never realise *anuttarasaṃyaksaṃbodhi*. [For] a *bodhisattva* who courses in *prajñāpāramitā,* the *dharmatā* of all *dharmas* (諸法之性, **sarvadharmadharmatā*?) is the path.[1720] Thus, the *bodhisattva* who courses in *prajñāpāramitā* knows that all *dharmas* are exactly *dharmatā,* and teaches the nameless (i.e. ineffable) *dharma* by means of names (words); from the five *skandhas* through to the path, he expounds all [the categories of the teaching] by means of the [standard] names, terms, and numbered rubrics.'"[1721]

三十三天夜摩天兜率陀天化樂天他化自在天。何以學生梵天王住處光音天遍淨天廣果天無想天淨居天。何以學生無邊空處。生無邊識處。無所有處。生非有想非無想處, T223.400a07-11.

[1716] Note that *dhāraṇīmukhāḥ* is also included in the list apparently corresponding to this one found in Kimura's published portions of *Pañca,* for which see n. 1707.

[1717] Cf. Kumārajīva, "study *anuttarasaṃyaksaṃbodhi*", 學阿耨多羅三藐三菩提, T223.400a15-16.

[1718] Cf. Kumārajīva, "by obtaining *sarvajñajñāna,* know all *dharmas*", 已得一切種智知一切法, T223.400a16.

[1719] Cf. Kumārajīva, "if all *dharmas* are without distinction in *dharmatā*", 諸法法性中無是分別, T223.400a17.

[1720] Cf. Kumārajīva, "knowing the *dharmatā* of all *dharmas* is *anuttarasaṃyaksaṃbodhi",* 知一切法性即是阿耨多羅三藐三菩提, T223.400a26-27.

[1721] 佛報言。若有異法離於法性者。是色身法性則爲有別。何以故。須菩提。如來及如來弟子。不見有法離於法性與法性有別者。雖不見不處法無有二離法性者。佛告須菩提。菩薩行般若波羅蜜。當作是學法性。須菩提白佛言。世尊。菩薩學法性者爲無所學。佛告須菩提。菩薩學法性者爲盡學一切諸法。何以故。一切諸法皆是法性。須菩提白佛言。何以故。諸法皆是法性。諸有爲法皆是法性。是故須菩提。菩薩學般若波羅蜜者。爲學法性。須菩提白佛言。假令諸法皆是法性。菩薩用何等故行六波羅蜜。何以故。行四禪四等四空定。云何行三十七道品三脫門八惟無九次第禪十力四無所畏。何以故。學佛十八法。學六通三十二相。學成就八十種好。何以故。學生四姓家。何以故。學生四天上。從第四天至三十三天。何以故。從初發意至第十地。何以故。學三乘淨佛國土教化眾生。學陀隣尼門學辯才。何以故。學菩薩道。學諸法如。知一切眾事。法性中無有是若干分數。世尊。將無菩薩行顛倒事。所以者何。法性亦非五陰。法性亦不離五陰。法性則是五陰。五陰則是法性。佛告須菩提。如是如是。須菩提如汝所言。法性則是五陰五陰則是法性。須菩提。菩薩行般若

Noteworthy for us in this passage is the prevalence, among the list of items that Subhūti asks about the point of studying, of terms associated with one or another conception of the Buddha's embodiments known from other sources (underlined).[1722] The logic of Subhūti's central, long question can be reconstructed as follows: If literally *all dharmas,* without exception, are identical with *dharmatā* – including afflicted *dharmas* epitomised by the five *skandhas* – then what is the point of practising diligently in order to "acquire" or realise the special *dharmas* that comprise Buddhahood? The implication is that, in the ordinary conception of practice that the text is here trying to guard against and go beyond, the attainment of these special *dharmas* is understood as somehow equivalent with the realisation of *dharmatā* itself.

On the other hand, we might also observe that there is good reason to consider that the entire list of the *dharmas* Subhūti asks about striving for, prior to the marks, is a quite logical candidate for the title of a prototypical *dharmakāya.* Even apart from the items underlined, which are known to be overtly associated with the *dharmakāya* in Sarvâstivādin sources, all the other items on the list down to the six *abhijñā* are also called *buddhadharmas* in AK Ch. 7 & 8, though they are there held to be *dharmas* that the Buddha has in common with some other beings.[1723] Among the *buddhadharmas* listed there are (in order of their appearance in Mokṣala

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波羅蜜。若見法有離法性者。終不發阿耨多羅三耶三菩。菩薩行般若波羅蜜諸法之性則是道。是故菩薩行般若波羅蜜。知諸法則是法性。無名之法以名教授。從五陰至道皆以名號法數字說之; T221.129c16-130a19.

[1722] The place of the thirty-two major and eighty minor marks in schemes of embodiments should be so obvious as to require no comment. For the other items underlined, cf. e.g. **Mahāvibhāṣā,* 三法身等。謂諸如來皆得十力四無所畏。三念住大悲十八不共法等勝功德故, T1545.624a13-15; see also Makransky, *Buddhahood Embodied* 23-27.

[1723] See also Bh to 7.35, VP V, 86, where a list is given corresponding in significant part to the one at issue here, and it is specifically stated that the *dharmas* concerned are common to the Buddhas and Arhats and can also be possessed by *pṛthagjanas.* At AKBh to 7.26c, it is specified that all these items are cultivated by the Arhat, at the moment when *kṣayajñāna* (the *jñāna* definitive of entry into arhatship) arises; VP V, 62. On *kṣayajñāna* and related concepts in *Vibh* and AK & Bh, see below §7.3.9. Note also that the *dhyānas, vimokṣas, samādhis* and *samāpattis* are grouped together as the third of the ten "powers" (*bala*) under the

above): the four *dhyānas,*[1724] the four measureless states of mind (*apramāṇa*),[1725] and the four formless concentrations (*arūpyasamāpatti*),[1726] the three "gates to liberation" (三脫門, *trīṇi vimokṣamukhāni*),[1727] the eight kinds of liberation (*vimokṣa*),[1728] and the six *abhijñā.*[1729] This leaves over from the Mokṣala list only the nine graduated *dhyānas* (*navânupūrvasamāpattayaḥ*) and the thirty-seven members of the enlightenment (*bodhipakṣikādharmāḥ*). However, we may note that the nine graduated *dhyānas* are all included in the AK list under other rubrics,[1730] while the *bodhipakṣikādharmāḥ* are, of course, components of *bodhi* ("awakening"), which is clearly virtually commutable with *buddha* ("the one awakened"). In sum, then, there is a clear conceptual unity binding together this entire first part of Subhūti's list, whereby they are the special *dharmas* that between them define a Buddha as a Buddha, whether they are shared with other beings of remarkable spiritual attainments or not – that is, they are a perfectly logical prototypical *dharmakāya,* where that term is understood as "embodiment in (or the collection of) the special *buddhadharmas*".

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rubric of the eighteen qualities unique to a Buddha (*āveṇikadharmāḥ*) at AKBh to 7.28c-29, VP V, 69 (where VP provides cross-references to the Ch. 8 passages listed below, among other sources). On the eighteen *āveṇikadharmāḥ* in Sarvâstivāda, see below §7.3.8.

1724 AK 8.1, VP V, 127-133. The *dhyānas* and the *arūpyas* are considered in conjunction at 8.6- VP V, 145-182, and each is intermittently mentioned thereafter in the remainder of Ch. 8.

1725 AK 8.29-31, VP V, 196-203.

1726 AK 8.2, VP V, 133-145. The *dhyānas* and the *arūpyas* are considered in conjunction at 8.6- VP V, 145-182, and each is intermittently mentioned thereafter in the remainder of Ch. 8.

1727 AK 8.25b, VP V, 187.

1728 AK 8.32-34, VP V, 203-211.

1729 AK 7.42-56, VP V, 97-126.

1730 Note that eight of these nine *samāpattayaḥ* are included in the four *dhyānas* and the four *arūpyasamāpattayaḥ,* cf. n. 1724, 1726. The last, *nirodhasamāpatti,* is treated as the eighth of the eight *vimokṣa* at AK 8.33, VP V, 207, and at 8.37a-b, VP V, 215, but I have not found the nine treated together as a single rubric in AK.

It is surely significant, therefore, that this set of goals for realisation is immediately juxtaposed with another vision of ideal embodiment, viz. the body of marks. We have already seen that in Lokakṣema's *Aṣṭa* a century earlier, the marks were understood as a regular corporeal concomitant of the realisation of a gnosis (closely associated with *bodhi*) that was understood as the quintessence of Buddhahood. Further, the next category after that in Subhūti's list here is rebirths, that is, embodiments voluntarily chosen for the fulfilment of *bodhisattva* vows. The context, therefore, is one in which embodiment is at issue. This combines with the contrast implied by Subhūti's question between the striving for these various attainments, on the one hand, and the *rūpakāya;* that is to say, the alternative open to one who does not strive is also envisaged in terms of an embodiment, but this time, one that is undesirable and has nothing special about it whatsoever.

Mokṣala's text also states that the Buddha's body is produced from *prajñāpāramitā* in the context of its polemic against relics, which parallels similar statements in Lokakṣema's Chapter 3.[1731] The way Mokṣala's text articulates this understanding point further confirms that Subhūti's list as a whole represents a loose, prototypical understanding of the Buddha's embodiment. Where versions of the text in *Aṣṭa* merely speak of "the body/relic(s)" (*ātmabhāvaśarīra*) as so produced from *prajñāpāramitā,* Mokṣala, as we have already seen, speaks rather of the "major and minor marks". In the latter part of the passage, however, we are given even more detail, in a clear echo of the doctrinal categories structuring Subhūti's question in the passage above:

> "*Sarvajñajñāna* is produced from *prajñāpāramitā,* and therefore I would choose *prajñāpāramitā* from among these two treasures [= 'portions', choices, i.e. over the relics]. The reason for this is that the body of the Tathāgata is produced from *prajñāpāramitā*; <u>the thirty-two marks of the *mahāpuruṣa,* the ten powers of the Buddha, the four confidences, the eighteen [*āveṇika*] *buddhadharmas,* great compassion and great</u>

[1731] See above §4.3.2, esp. p. 702, where we have already had cause to mention Mokṣala's version of this passage.

pity – all [these] are produced from *prajñāpāramitā*. The [other] five perfections are all produced from *prajñāpāramitā,* and only thus are they worthy of the name [of 'perfection']. The *sarvajñajñāna* attained by the Tathāgata are[1732] also all produced from *prajñāpāramitā.*"[1733]

With this analysis in hand of the corporeal resonances of the present passage from Mokṣala's Chapter 79, we can turn our attention back to the fact that in his question, Subhūti implicitly equates the realisation of these *dharmas* with the realisation of *dharmatā* itself, and the fact that he frames his worry about the pointlessness of striving for all these things by saying that there would be no distinction between *rūpakāya* and *dharmatā*. It seems likely that in this passage, we almost catch in action the process of coalescence between an older notion of the (proto-)*dharmakāya*,[1734] whereby the Buddha is conceived of as embodied most veritably in his gnosis (*bodhi, bodhyaṇga*) and/or his special qualities as *buddha,* and the new conception we saw emerging in the first passage we cited from Mokṣala at the opening of this section, whereby the Buddha is identified with, and eventually conceived of as embodied in, the "absolute" as understood through the concept of *dharmatā* and cognate terms.

Thus, to conclude this examination of the emergence of the "classic" Mahāyāna conception of *dharmakāya* around the time of Mokṣala, we see that in Mokṣala's *Pañca, dharmatā* is clearly identified with *dharmatā* in at least one passage*;* that in other passages, *dharmatā* is clearly identified with the "absolute" under various names, and that this absolute is also identified under many of its appellations with the Tathāgata; that *dharmatā* in this sense is contrasted

[1732] Unless this *jie* refers to the entire preceding list, the impression is that the text somehow considers *sarvajñajñāna* as multiple.

[1733]當知薩云若之慧皆從般若波羅蜜得成。是故我於二寶之中取般若波羅蜜。何以故。如來身者從般若波羅蜜中出生。大士三十二之相。佛十種力四無所畏佛十八法大慈大悲。皆從般若波羅蜜出生。五波羅蜜者亦從般若波羅蜜出生。各得名字。如來所得薩云若慧。皆從般若波羅蜜中出, T221.52b10-16.

[1734] I call it "proto-" perhaps because it may yet lack the name, depending upon the relative chronology of our Sarvâstivāda sources.

with the *rūpakāya;* and that it is also contrasted with *rūpakāya* in a context where it is seemingly being used to refer to the collection of *buddhadharmas,* which is also a known interpretation of the term *dharmakāya*. It is clear that by the time of Mokṣala's version of the text, the Mahāyāna "absolute" had already emerged as an important concept, and moreover was being identified, via the application to it of the term *dharmatā,* with the old term *dharmakāya*; it also shows that even this early, this application of the term *dharmakāya* to *dharmatā* had led to a commutable relation whereby *dharmatā* was being associated with other dimensions of the concept of *dharmakāya* probably already established in other (scholastic) contexts.

As we have had occasion to observe in passing above, the status of this newly minted understanding of *dharmakāya* in the Prajñāpāramitā literature was not static, and as time progressed, it found its way into more and more contexts. For our present purposes, however, it is enough to establish firmly the date by which, at the latest, the concept of *dharmakāya* at issue here was present in the overall mix of doctrines about the Buddha's embodiments, and I believe that the above discussion shows amply that this was the case by Mokṣala. The task of tracing the details of subsequent developments can therefore be left for future research, and for the purposes of the task to hand, we can progress with the assurance that we will not be anachronistic if we speak of the "classic" Mahāyāna understanding of *dharmakāya* as part of the overall spectrum of embodiment discourse from this point in doctrinal history on.

4.3.12 Conclusions

With this identification of the clear coalescence of the important component elements of the "classic" Mahāyāna metaphysical *dharmakāya* with the name as such in Mokṣala, we will now leave off our examination of conceptions of the Buddha's embodiments in the early Prajñāpāramitā literature, and round up some conclusions that we can carry over into the larger picture of the development of Buddhist ideas about bodies in general.

Before summarising the positive conclusions that I think are warranted on the basis of the above materials and analysis, I would like first to note the limitations of this study. As should be clear from the very rich concepts we discovered above in quite a limited subset of the vast Prajñāpāramitā literature, this analysis has really only scratched the surface of an extremely complex topic. Further, in following through the development of some sample passages at the end of §4.3.2 and 4.3.3 respectively, and also in our quick look at Harrison's supposed quotation of a "Mainstream" source in the Sanskrit parallel to the only apparent mention of *dharmakāya* in Lokakṣema's *Aṣṭa* in §4.3.8, we saw that the problem of embodiments continued to be a focus of considerable doctrinal change and ferment throughout a very long history of the Prajñāpāramitā at least down to Dānapāla. This should warn us against assuming, just because the logistical exigencies of the present study demand that we now turn our attention to other questions, that the arrival of the "classic" *dharmakāya* in Mokṣala somehow represents the endpoint of interesting developments in this literature. To think this would of course be to replicate the form of the faulty teleological thinking that is, in the case of *trikāya* doctrine, one of the main polemical targets of this dissertation as a whole. It is rather certainly the case that a rich variety of ideas about embodiment continued to coexist and vie for airtime in this literature for a very long time after Mokṣala. A further anti-teleological lesson we can draw from the analysis here is that in light of the way most scholarship of the Buddha's bodies to date closes down the topic after the arrival of *trikāya,* it is very sobering to see how little role *trikāya* doctrine seems to play in Prajñāpāramitā texts even after the time of Asaṇga and Vasubandhu, and that even in the translations of a figure like Xuanzang, who was clearly among the figures in Buddhist history best informed in the doctrines of their school.

Thus, the analysis offered here, even if, as I believe, it goes considerably beyond anything noted in the secondary literature to date, must be understood as partial at best, and applying only to a limited subset of the Prajñāpāramitā as a whole. With this proviso in mind, I believe it is possible to state the following conclusions on the basis of the study summarised in this section of this dissertation.

Right from the very earliest evidence we have, in the *Aṣṭa* of Lokakṣema, the Prajñāpāramitā literature plays host to a well-developed and complex set of ideas about the embodiments of the Buddha that represent, in their sum, considerable innovation and development beyond anything seen in the earlier record. Some of these ideas, as Harrison rightly points out, are shared with Mainstream sources, including a basic conception of the Buddha as most veritably embodied in his gnosis, shared with the Sarvâstivādins, to which Harrison does not draw attention. However, *pace* Harrison, it is not possible, on the basis of the objective record available to us, to assign chronological parallel to either Mainstream or Mahāyāna sources as the home ground of these ideas, which are equally tightly integrated into both kinds of context as soon as our post-Pāli-canonical Chinese record begins.

In Lokakṣema's *Aṣṭa,* I believe I have located the centre of gravity of a complex set of ideas about the Buddhas embodiments neither in the putative "Mainstream" understanding as Harrison characterises it, nor in what I have called the "classic" Mahāyāna metaphysical understanding, to which Harrison opposes this "Mainstream" reading. Rather, I believe the doctrine of the Buddha's embodiments is centred on its explicit claim that the most authentic and intrinsic embodiment of the Buddha is in his gnosis. The text speaks of this embodiment in gnosis under two main heads: first, and most centrally, in the "omniscience" (*sarvajñatā*) of the Buddha, and second, in the "[insight of] special knowledge of liberation" (*vimuktijñāna*[-

darśana]), which is most emphatically spoken of in corporeal terms among a set of five "pure aggregates which are also *all* spoken of as a form of embodiment.

We can know that this gnostic model of embodiment is most central in the text for a number of reasons.

First, the text explicitly tells us so. In Chapters 3 and 4, in the context of the polemic against worship of relics as the most efficacious merit-making practice, the text repeatedly stresses that the "body of omniscience" (**sarvajñatâtmabhāva*) springs most directly from *prajñāpāramitā* itself, and that other embodiments, i.e. the relics and the last earthly body of the Buddha, only have their being in a fashion derivative from the body of omniscience.

Second, it also stands to reason that in a text, and indeed a literature, whose primary concern is to argue the salvific, cultic and even metaphysical primacy of *prajñāpāramitā,* that is, the perfection of *wisdom,* an embodiment in gnosis, where such is contemplated and available, will be regarded as the most veritable embodiment. The gnosis of the Buddha is merely the specific realisation in him of the universal truth that is referred to by the name *prajñāpāramitā;* it is most centrally in virtue of his realisation of this *prajñāpāramitā* that he is *buddha*; and this already tells us what it *means* to say that he is embodied in a gnosis sprung directly from *prajñāpāramitā.* Indeed, as we saw in §4.3.5, the text entertains, almost equally with the claim that *sarvajñatā* is sprung from *prajñāpāramitā,* an alternative presentation upon which it is virtually identical with it. This raises the possibility that the text indirectly posits the possibility that the Buddha is embodied in *prajñāpāramitā* itself, a possibility whose ramifications, in light of the various meanings of *prajñāpāramitā* itself in the text, we will return to momentarily.

Third, in the larger context of the great sweep of development in ideas about embodiment *per se,* the centrality of the notion of embodiment in gnosis to the overall landscape of ideas about embodiment in the text is most likely also indicated precisely by the fact that it is articulated in the context of the anti-relic polemic. As we have seen in previous chapters, the most prominent understanding of a possibility that buddhahood might have an adequate, positive, special embodiment in the world, prior to the period we are now examining is found precisely in the understanding of relics that was already well established in cultic practice by the time of the Kharoṣṭhī reliquary inscriptions at the latest, and probably, indeed, already by the end of the Pāli-canonical period itself. Conversely, the evidence for any other notion of an adequate, positive, special embodiment of the Buddha is, contrary to received opinion, extremely thin, and does not stand up to close scrutiny.

It is notable, of course, that the very *question* of the mainsprings of the conceit of embodiment, and the timing of its advent into the overall trajectory of development of Buddhist ideas, has never been considered in previous studies. Rather, the corporeal conceit *per se* has been taken for granted, as if it is a matter of course that Buddhists would predicate positively conceived ideal bodies to the Buddha, and the question has rather been of why this or that doctrine was framed at a certain time. In part, this oversight has been conditioned by the error, in turn the product of too much trust in the apologetic uses of Nikāya and Āgama scriptural passages as warrant for later ideas by the later tradition, of thinking that many later doctrines were already present in some form in the Pāli canon itself; as we have consistently seen above, this understanding is not justified. There *is,* therefore, certainly something here to be explained, when, as we emerge from the chronological "black box" that intervenes in our record between the end of the Pāli-canonical period and the inception of the Chinese record, bodies are

suddenly all over a wide range of Buddhist literature – in the Schools, in the incipient Mahāyāna, and perhaps, if later Chinese translations are a reliable guide, even in the Āgamas.

I believe that the most plausible explanation for the explosion of the very corporeal conceit itself in this period – at a level more fundamental than its instantiation in this or that specific doctrine of embodiment – is most likely to be found in a reaction to the authority, popularity and success of the relics of the Buddha as his veritable embodiments, as cultic objects, and as powerful counters in worldly games of patronage and political power. Absent this hypothesis, and the sudden proliferation of variations on the theme of the Buddha's ideal embodiment in the post-Pāli-canonical period simply comes out of the blue.

Alone among scholars that I am aware of, Yūichi Kajiyama seems to have recognised this dynamic, whereby what is at stake in the polemic Schopen describes as the cult of relics vs. the cult of the book is in fact a dispute about the most veritable embodiment of the Buddha, and that it is therefore a part of the dynamic that leads to the new conception of the *dharmakāya*:

> "This development [the advocation of substitution of *prajñāpāramitā* worship for '*stūpa* worship'] does not mean only a change in the object of Buddhist worship, but a change in the idea of the Buddha-body. Compared with the physical body of the Buddha,[1735] *prajñāpāramitā* means the spiritual essence of a Buddha, which is equated to the absolute truth of emptiness (*śūnyatā*) . . . . Dharmabhāṇakas stressed that the worship of the *Prajñāpāramitā-sūtra* enshrined in a *caitya* or that of the *prajñāpāramitā* itself had greater merits than the worship of the relics of the Buddha in a *stūpa*. In so doing, they said that relics represented the physical body of a Buddha, whereas *prajñāpāramitā* represented the supreme and perfect enlightenment as well as the omniscience of a Buddha . . . . Thus, the physical Buddha body came to be called *rūpakāya,* while the Buddha body equated with *prajñāpāramitā* was called *dharmakāya*."[1736]

[1735] Kajiyama has on the same page stated that "the word *śarīra* was understood both as relics and as a physical body", referring to the Skt. *Aṣṭa* Ch. 4 juxtaposition of relic worship and talk of the Buddha's *ātmabhāva*.

[1736] Kajiyama, "Stūpas, the Mother of Buddhas, and Dharma-Body" 12-13. Kajiyama's suggestion here that *rūpakāya* most properly refers to the relics would take us too far afield here, but it is possible that it contains the seeds of more historical truth than the frequent application of the notion of *rūpakāya* to the last earthly body of the Buddha in his lifetime. Kajiyama goes on to say, "The theory of the two-bodied Buddha was completed in a comparatively early stage in the development of the Sanskrit text of the

If this is the case, however, then it is most likely also true that the notion of embodiment Lokakṣema's *Aṣṭa* elaborates at the centre of its polemic against the supreme value of relics as objects of cultic worship is in fact the most central understanding of embodiment in the text as a whole. This factor, too, therefore, points to the concept of embodiment in gnosis as the core understanding of the Buddha's embodiment in the text.

Though it constitutes slender evidence, given its unique nature and the textual difficulties it presents, some support for this hypothesis is also afforded by the close integration of *bodhi* to the conception of relics elaborated in the Senavarma Inscription, and also by the more frequent habit of inscriptional writers of speaking of relic as "quickened" by the very five "pure aggregates" that are considered "attendants" of *bodhi* in the cognate notion of embodiment in gnosis found in Sarvâstivādin sources. Embodiment in gnosis, and attribution of the five pure aggregates, is a key feature of the understanding of relics contemporaneous with or even prior to *Aṣṭa* itself; and *Aṣṭa* arrogates the status of most veritable embodiment to pure gnosis itself, and to those same pure aggregates. This also suggests that for that text, the polemic against the relics is a key motivation to foreground the conceit of embodiment *per se*.

Fourth and finally, we can also consider embodiment in gnosis the most central doctrine of embodiment in Lokakṣema's *Aṣṭa* by a process of elimination. Even though there are indeed shades of other doctrines of embodiment present in the text, they are nowhere nearly as clearly delineated as embodiment in gnosis and related forms of embodiment, and in fact, both

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Aṣṭa." As we have seen, however, even in Lokakṣema, ideas about the Buddha's embodiments are considerably more complex than a mere "two body theory", and it is also not the case that *dharmakāya* and *rūpakāya* are ever presented as a "theory" in which they are articulated with one another in the manner of bodies in the later *trikāya* schema. For these reasons, I would draw short of endorsing this last part of Kajiyama's characterisation of the ideas of embodiment in Praj. literature.

of the remaining conceptions are not really spoken of in the overt terms of the conceit of embodiment at all.

Thus, even if this notion of the Buddha's most veritable embodiment in gnosis is most central to the discourse of embodiment in *Aṣṭa,* it is far from being the only conception of embodiment. In fact, the body of gnosis sits at the centre of a complex landscape of multiple ideas of genuine embodiments of the Buddha.

First, in the context of the polemic against relics, it is clear that relics are recognised as a veritable embodiment of the Buddha and a veritable product of *prajñāpāramitā,* however inferior in value it might be to *prajñāpāramitā* itself. Second, in conjunction with this understanding of the relics, we also saw that the same logic is applied to the last worldly body of the Buddha, of which the relics are vestiges after his *parinirvāṇa*: it too is a veritable embodiment, but derivative of the *sarvajñatâtmabhāva.* It is quite clear also, I contend, that this last earthly body is identified with the body of marks, similarly conceived of as derivative of *sarvajñatâtmabhāva.*

It is significantly clear, I argued, that the text also contains important elements of the later "classic" Mahāyāna metaphysical notion of the *dharmakāya* are indeed present in Lokakṣema's text, though yet nowhere under the overt *name* of *dharmakāya.* We saw in §4.3.7 that the opening of the "Thusness" chapter presents Buddhas as *like* the "absolute", already represented by a good portion of its classic epithets and characterisations, in that they do not "come and go", though the text stops short of identifying the Buddha's directly with this "absolute" in the manner of later recensions. While this conception is not spoken of in the language of the

corporeal conceit, I argued that it clearly shows that the ground is already being laid for the conception of the Buddha as embodied in *dharmatā* or the "absolute" more broadly conceived.

This contention that significant elements of the "classic" Mahāyāna *dharmakāya* are already in place, if under different names, was also borne out by the evidence of other texts in the Lokakṣema corpus, where I read Harrison's own evidence precisely against the conclusions he wishes to draw from it. We saw, in §4.3.9, that in texts other than *Aṣṭa* but obviously at the same stage in Buddhist doctrinal history, Lokakṣema consistently uses the term *fashen* 法身, which we would most naturally expect to mean "*dharma* body", to refer to a dimension of *dharmas* that is clearly also compatible with the emergent "classic" Mahāyāna notion of the *dharmakāya*. In all cases, however, other extant versions of the texts speak rather, in the same places, of all *dharmas,* the *dharmadhātu, dharmatā* etc. It cannot be insignificant, however, that as we saw, in many of these passages, what is said of *fashen*/all *dharmas* etc. is not only reconcilable with the later "classic" Mahāyāna understanding of *dharmakāya,* but in some cases, difficult to interpret in any other sense.

In sum, then, the overall landscape of ideas relating to the development of discourse about the Buddha's embodiments in *Aṣṭa* includes, in addition to the clear and overt model of multiple interrelated embodiments centring on *sarvajñatâtmabhāva* propounded in the context of the anti-relic polemic, clear prolepses of the soon-to-come "classic" Mahāyāna *dharmakāya,* though not yet clearly in name.

It is, finally, also clear that the text does indeed vaguely recognise the notion of the embodiment of a Buddha in plural *buddhadharmas,*[1737] though this claim is advanced no more under the head of *dharmakāya* than any of the other conceptions of embodiment we find here. However, this understanding is nowhere that I know of even expressed in terms of a bodily conceit, let alone the terms of the *dharmakāya,* and it also seems, on balance, that it is the least important of all the conceptions of the Buddha's embodiment found in the text, contrary to what we might expect from the great emphasis placed upon it by Harrison.

Thus, the overall range of ideas about embodiment in this text may be summarised thus:

(1) most centrally, embodiment in gnosis;

(2) ancillary to and derivative of embodiment in gnosis, relics and the final worldly body of marks;

(3) foreshadowings of significant components of the "classic" Mahāyāna *dharmakāya,* not yet named in terms of "body";

(4) some signs of embodiment in plural Buddha *dharmas,* also not named in terms of "body".

This is a vastly different picture to anything the secondary literature to date would lead us to expect.

As we saw in §4.3.11, the emergent "classic" Mahāyāna metaphysical notion of the *dharmakāya,* even if it was not identified as such in name in Lokakṣema, had to wait at most approximately a

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[1737] See e.g. the passage cited above p. 774, where the text speaks of *jingfa* and other versions of the text speak of *sarvadharma*.

century before even this final step was taken. This step can be clearly seen in Mokṣala's *Pañca.* We also saw that even in that version of the text, the term *dharmatā* (*faxing* 法性) is apparently used interchangeably with *dharmakāya* in such a degree that it is even used, in one extended passage, as a head under which to discuss the entire collection of *buddhadharmas.* These facts seem to indicate that even when the term *dharmakāya* is applied to the "classic" Mahāyāna understanding of the Buddha's embodiment in the "absolute", other terms are also used to label the same understanding, and therefore that once more, excessive insistence on the actual *term dharmakāya* will lead us to overlook important parts of the overall picture. We also saw, in the same passage, that *bodhi* (this time in the guise of the thirty-seven *bodhyaṇga*) was also a part of the same understanding of the *dharmakāya-cum-dharmatā.

This summarises the main facts and claims that have emerged in the course of the above analysis. In closing, I will offer a few more general comments on their basis.

First, it seems clear that the notion of embodiment in gnosis, *qua bodhi* or *jñāna* of various kinds, is a central component of the overall discourse about the Buddha's embodiments that has been give far too little attention in studies to date. As I will further note in Chapter 4.3 below, it is only with Makransky's recent excellent attention to the actual facts of the Sarvâstivāda position that the key role of gnosis in their understanding of *dharmakāya* was given its proper due; now, when we turn our attention to hitherto overlooked passages in early Prajñāpāramitā texts, we find that it constitutes an unobserved central feature of the doctrine of embodiment there, as well.

As I already mentioned above, it seems to me that the centrality of this embodiment in gnosis to the overall vision of the Buddha's embodiments in Lokakṣema's *Aṣṭa* can be intelligibly

related to the central agendas of the Prajñāpāramitā literature as a whole. We might surely characterise that literature, as a whole, as centrally concerned with the reinstatement of gnosis to pride of place in the Buddhist salvific project, as the very name it goes by, and its most central concept and value, clearly indicates.

I believe, however, that it emerged clearly, even if somewhat incidentally, in the course of the above discussion, that this central watchword and value of *prajñāpāramitā* bears an important triple valence, which is carefully husbanded and manipulated to various ends in the text. First, *prajñāpāramitā* is indeed a gnosis, that is, it is the perfection of a faculty or accomplishment of "wisdom" as the keystone of a larger articulated system of *bodhisattva* practice. Second, however, *prajñāpāramitā* is also another of the bywords for the metaphysical "absolute" itself, that is, the truth that runs through all things when they are seen in light of the gnosis of the perfection of wisdom.[1738] Third, it refers to a literature, that is, a body of teachings and the physical (in many cases, explicitly written[1739]) texts in which they are found and transmitted. Each of these dimensions of the trivalent *prajñāpāramitā* bears significantly on the centrality of embodiment in gnosis to the overall set of ideas about embodiment in the texts, and I will deal with each in turn, proceeding in reverse order.

First, then, as Schopen has rightly pointed out, the fact that *prajñāpāramitā* can and does often refer to the physical text is a central component in the polemic against the supremacy of relics as objects of cultic practice, and in its competing promotion of the cult of the book. It is possibly an important component of the polemic against relics that there is indeed a written

[1738] This dimension of the term is clear, for example, in the passage about *prajñāpāramitā* pervading, sustaining, illuminating etc. all things, cited at p. 773.

[1739] See n. 1486 refuting Vetter's attempt to discredit Schopen's identification of a "cult of the book" in this phase of the Prajñāpāramitā literature.

book to put forth as a physical object that can be circulated and worshipped in the stead of the Buddha's relics, and to this extent, the specific conjunction of the discourse of embodiment in *prajñāpāramitā* and the polemic against relics found here may have required the transition to written textuality to get off the ground. That said, however, I believe that it is possible Schopen's apparently materialist methodological preferences may lead him to exaggerate the importance of the written text as physical object in the overall scheme of the polemic against relics. Without wanting to denigrate unnecessarily the significant place of real-world economics of patronage, of textual production, preservation and circulation, and of building and maintaining institutions and community, I would urge that to imagine the "cult of the book" as the primary driving engine in the overall configuration of the *prajñāpāramitā* polemic against relics is overly cynical, and indeed, may put the cart before the horse. I will advance my reasons for this view by considering the other two prongs of the trivalent *prajñāpāramitā.*

Second, then, turning to *prajñāpāramitā* as a byword for the "absolute" itself, it seems to me that the most plausible interpretation of the move to identify this "absolute" with *prajñāpāramitā* is twofold. First, this "absolute" *prajñāpāramitā* is indeed in an important sense conceived of as a kind of metaphysical ground of all phenomenal existents (though we must of course recall that all the terms of this formulation are problematised and nuanced by the special understanding of the impasses of ontology and metaphysics advanced elsewhere in the texts). Not only is *prajñāpāramitā* that which produces *sarvajñatā* etc., it also produces all things, pervades all things, and so forth. Second, then, insofar as *prajñāpāramitā* is thus identified as a kind of absolute or metaphysical ground, its status as a kind of gnosis is elevated from, or transcends, the normal, referential and therefore secondary relation borne by ordinary kinds of knowledge to the world, and that relation is in fact reversed; gnosis is the ground of truth upon which the

world is based, or that runs through the otherwise flimsy half-existence of phenomena themselves, and the world is rendered secondary to or derivative of gnosis.

Third and finally, then, this brings us back to the apparently central status of *prajñāpāramitā* as gnosis, and indeed, as is demonstrated by the sometime identity of *sarvajñatā* and *prajñāpāramitā* traced out in §4.3.5, as the gnosis in which buddhahood is in fact most veritably embodied. The difference between *prajñāpāramitā* as a (quasi-)metaphysical "ground" of all things and *prajñāpāramitā* as gnosis (if you like, between dimensions that might roughly be called "noema" and "noesis") is that in the latter case, *prajñāpāramitā* is realised in a knowing subject – one *buddha.* And yet, we must note carefully that the way the text explicitly describes the relation between these aspects, where it differentiates them, is quite different from what we might normally understand by the idea of "knowing". *Prajñāpāramitā* as "ground" gives rise not only to the things of the world, but likewise, by a process described in identical terms, to perfect gnosis (*sarvajñatā, anuttarasaṃyaksaṃbodhi*) itself. Gnosis is thus assured the status of a direct reality; it is certainly as real as anything else in the system, and indeed, seemingly more so, in virtue of its particularly proximate and intimate relation, and sometime identity, with *prajñāpāramitā* itself.

Arguably, all this means that in the Janus-faced dual identity of *prajñāpāramitā* as both gnosis and quasi-metaphysical ground, we see an important forerunner of the later central Mahāyāna philosophical category of *advaya,* the "non-duality" between knower and known in the state of perfect gnosis. Indeed, such an implicit non-duality, I think, is what makes perfect gnosis perfect *as* gnosis, on the one hand, and what makes *prajñāpāramitā* perfect, surely in part because perfectly knowable, on the other.

To return fleetingly to the relation of these dimensions of *prajñāpāramitā* to the cult of the book, therefore, I think that we must grant at least equal weight to these doctrinal and philosophical considerations as to any "hard facts" of worldly patronage and economics, when we seek to explain the reasons that Prajñāpāramitā promotes a cult of the book against the cult of relics. The book is not only touted as a superior alternative to bits of physical stuff left behind from the Buddha's last earthly body because, perhaps, it happens to be what a bunch of *dharmabhāṇakas* had to make their living in the religious marketplace, but also because it is a (perhaps proximate) form in which *prajñāpāramitā* as gnosis and "absolute" *could* be integrated into Buddhist cultic practice.

This incipient non-duality of gnosis and "absolute" that coalesces under the head of *prajñāpāramitā* in these texts also has implications, however, for the way we should understand the emergent notion of *dharmakāya*. If, as we have seen, this literature conceives of the Buddha's embodiment as most centrally to be found in his gnosis, on the one hand, and in the "absolute", on the other, it becomes clear that these are not necessarily two competing conceptions, but rather, can equally be interpreted as two sides of a coherent conception of the essence of buddhahood precisely *as* the (non-dual) gnostic realisation of an "absolute", "metaphysical" truth. Such a conception of buddhahood, furthermore, would be absolutely in keeping with the central concerns of the Prajñāpāramitā literature. Little wonder, then, that the most essential and characteristic notions of the Buddha's embodiment we have found in these Prajñāpāramitā texts, even very early on, hold that the Buddha is embodied, first, in his gnosis, and, only a little later and still quite explicitly very soon in the literature, in the "absolute" this gnosis takes for its contents or "object".

4.3.13 Postscript: Against Paul Harrison's "Mainstream *dharmakāya*"

Throughout the preceding two sections of this dissertation (Ch. 4.2 and 4.3), I have been implicitly engaging with the landmark work of Paul Harrison, which in many respects represents the state of the field on the question of embodiment in the literature and period of Mahāyāna with which I deal here. However, my arguments against Harrison's work have often been in the background or relegated to footnotes. In what follows, I will summarise my disagreements with Harrison's understanding of the *dharmakāya* in this period.

Harrison's well-known and erudite 1992 article "Is the *Dharma-kāya* the Real 'Phantom Body' of the Buddha?" is the best (and indeed, almost the only) careful and detailed study of ideas about embodiment in this particular set of Buddhist literature, and in this early phase of the Mahāyāna more generally. Harrison rightly takes issue with some overly simplistic models of Buddhist conceptual and doctrinal history that preceded him, in this case, particularly, with essentialising views that understand "the" notion of the *dharmakāya* only along the lines of a simplified interpretation of that concept as it enters into *trikāya* ("three body") theory.[1740] Harrison's article represents a significant methodological advance on those studies. It engages with ideas about the *dharmakāya* in a rich range of early Mahāyāna texts, and examines those texts through the firmly datable early Chinese translations of Lokakṣema (upon whose corpus Harrison is the acknowledged expert) and careful, authoritative scrutiny of parallels to those translations in Sanskrit, Tibetan and later Chinese versions of the texts. The study Harrison pursues on this basis unsurprisingly bears considerable excellent fruit.

[1740] Harrison, "Real Phantom Body" 44-45.

In particular, this dissertation follows Harrison in arguing that in many key passages in the extant Sanskrit texts, the term *dharmakāya* is frequently used as an adjectival *bahuvrīhi.*[1741] Thus, a phrase like *dharmakāyā tathāgatāḥ* is to be read "the Tathāgatas have a body of *dharma*/have *dharma*(*s*) for their body" and not "the *dharma* bodies [are] the Tathāgatas," as the phrase had previously been mistranslated.[1742]

Further, Harrison also usefully points out that in general, there may be significant overlaps between the understanding of the *dharmakāya* in Prajñāpāramitā sources and in what he aptly calls "Mainstream" sources. In this respect, too, this dissertation will build on and extend his work. We will have several occasions to observe an understanding of the Buddha's embodiment whereby he is embodied in *buddhadharmas* (variously listed), an understanding which is shared from the very outset of our post-Pāli-canonical record between Mahāyāna and "school" (particularly Sarvâstivāda) sources. I will differ with Harrison, however, in what I consider to be the most likely direction of influence underlying these commonalities.

Finally, Harrison's study is very instructive in calling into question the assumption that the concept of *dharmakāya,* in the sense that understands the Buddha to be embodied in the

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[1741] In Sanskrit a *bahuvrīhi* is a (compound) word used in modifying apposition to a headword in a sense that ascribes to the person or thing named in the headword possession of the thing(s) or quality(-ies) named in the modifier. English equivalents are scarce, imprecise, and for some reason often pejorative terms in what would in Sanskrit be the vocative, but the principle is close to usages like "four-eyes Radich" to mean "Radich who has four eyes"; similarly, cf. "hotcheeks", "butthead" etc.

[1742] Harrison himself follows Edgerton on this point; "Real Phantom Body" 49-50. Harrison also suggests the useful translation "the Buddha is . . . 'embodied' in the *dhamma*," 50. The mistranslation "The Dharma-bodies are the Tathāgatas" is Conze's, cited in Harrison 49. He also cites other instances of the same misinterpretation from Kajiyama and Makransky, 48. Makransky later corrected his reading on this point in light of Harrison's arguments, while rightly not accepting Harrison's argument that the Mahāyāna "absolute" is not to be found in the term *dharma-*.

"absolute",[1743] is present, dominant and orthodox right from the very start of "the" Mahāyāna, or that this is the only sense in which the term *dharmakāya* circulates in the Mahāyāna context. He thereby alerts us to the possibility of other readings and doctrines. As I hope the analysis below will corroborate, the concept of *dharmakāya* is indeed significantly more complex than the "standard" Mahāyāna reading even in the Prajñāpāramitā context. Furthermore, it is not possible to certainly identify the emergence of this metaphysical sense of the term *dharmakāya* until Mokṣala's *Pañca* in 291 C.E. (thought this is still significantly earlier than Harrison's arguments might lead us to expect).

Harrison's study thus represents a significant step forward in the study of the concept of *dharmakāya* and therefore in the study of doctrines of embodiment as a whole. However, it cannot be followed in all respects, and I have disagreed with several key arms of its central thesis.[1744]

[1743] I place this term in scare quotes throughout because of the obvious difficulties, in light of Mahāyāna (anti-)metaphysics, of positing a simple positive "absolute", in the more usual sense of a "ground of being" etc., in the Buddhist context. For the purposes of argument, however, the term will serve as a provisional counter of discourse.

[1744] I must acknowledge the general debt my arguments in this respect owe to the excellent lead of John Makransky, who in his *Buddhahood Embodied* has articulated cogent reasons for rejecting Harrison's central claim that the Prajñāpāramitā literature does in fact reflect the pluralistic understanding of the *dharmakāya* that Harrison calls "Mainstream", and shown rather that the use of the term is closely bound up with the new vision of the "absolute" (my term, not Makransky's), the attendant new vision of the goal of the Buddhist path, etc.; see Makransky, *Buddhahood Embodied,* 31-38, esp. 32; and esp. the excellent long n. 12, p. 373-375. Despite my general admiration for Makransky's treatment of this question, and indeed, his careful and thorough analysis of all the textual materials in whose study he precedes me, I must note for the sake of clarity two main points upon which I do not follow his interpretations here. First, note that Makransky is still prepared to accept Harrison's contention that there was a "Mainstream" understanding of the *dharmakāya*, and argues, against Harrison's claim that the early Mahāyāna as represented by the Prajñāpāramitā simply took this understanding over unchanged, that they appropriated relevant textual passages and radically reinterpreted them. In this dissertation, I go further than this in claiming that we have no firm evidence to warrant the belief that there was such a thing as this putative "Mainstream" understanding prior to the early Mahāyāna contexts Harrison studies (see also Ch. 4.5 below). Second, I would also note that Makransky courts anachronism in relying solely on the Sanskrit versions of the Prajñāpāramitā texts he treats, and in ranging freely over several texts from the corpus as if they represent a single unity. (I do not mean to imply, of course, that Makransky simply ignores the problem of the dates of these texts; see his characteristically careful discussion, 375-376 n. 20.) Implicitly, by the arrangement of his book, and explicitly by some of its arguments, Makransky treats Prajñāpāramitā ideas as forerunners of the "classic" Yogācāra *trikāya*

Harrison's central thesis in this study is that there is a "Mainstream"[1745] interpretation of the term *dharmakāya* which precedes a "Mahāyāna" understanding. Harrison holds that this "Mainstream" understanding persists, virtually exclusively, into the Mahāyāna for quite some time after its inception (and the inception of our historical record of it). Moreover, on this "Mainstream" interpretation, the term *dharmakāya,* where used as a noun, refers to "the body or collection of qualities, principles, truths or teachings".[1746] Harrison repeatedly emphasises, in this connection, that where *dharmakāya* is a noun, *dharma-* is to be interpreted in the plural. Indeed, he even goes so far as to propose that our default working translation of the term for the early and middle Mahāyāna should be "body of *dharmas*".

However, Harrison also seems somewhat ambivalent about parts of his own thesis. Elsewhere he seems to recognise, somewhat inconsistently, that where *dharmakāya* is a *bahuvrīhi* adjective, it means "having the *dharma* as body" or "embodied in the *dharma*" (my emphasis).[1747] In this

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doctrines he studies in his Chapter 4, which indeed in general they are. However, a more careful study of the development of these texts over time from the evidence of multiple translations in the Chinese record, such as I engage in selectively at relevant points below, shows that the particular form of the doctrines he summarises in his Chapter 3 is most likely in many of its details relatively late, and does not necessarily precede the watershed era of the Maitreya-Asaṇga-Vasubandhu corpus. However, the main points on which Makransky differs from Harrison in his interpretation of the Prajñāpāramitā doctrine of the *dharmakāya* survive adjustment for this anachronism, and are borne out by a careful examination of even the earliest layers of the literature – where, however, the emergent **dharmakāya* is not yet demonstrably known by that name.

[1745] Throughout this section, I have consistently applied ironising quotes to this term in application to Harrison's putative "Mainstream" understanding of the *dharmakāya,* not because I disagree with the use of the term "Mainstream" itself (on the contrary, I consider it one of the best solutions I have seen to the problem of what to call the pre- and non-Mahāyāna), but to indicate that I can follow Harrison neither in his ascription of priority in the ideas concerned to Mainstream contexts, nor in his interpretation of many passages in terms of the specific contents he ascribes to that understanding.

[1746] Harrison, "Real Phantom Body" 58.

[1747] Harrison, "Real Phantom Body" 67.

case, he very often himself translates in the singular,[1748] without this leading him to moderate his broader general claims than in all cases where the term is used nominally, we should translate *dharma* in the plural. This fact that betrays the difficulty of maintaining the clear division he seems implicitly to set up in his own translation practice between *dharma-* in *bahuvrīhi dharmakāya* as singular and referring to the teaching, and *dharma-* in nominal *dharmakāya* as plural and referring to the Buddha's qualities.[1749]

This confusion reaches beyond the *number* of the "*dharma-*" in *dharmakāya* to its content. In contrast to his clear statements about the nominal body of plural *dharmas,* it is never precisely clear in what sense Harrison understands the singular *dharma* as it emerges from his implicit translation practice. The best we can do is infer it by a process of elimination from his exclusion of what he calls the "developed Mahāyāna" interpretation. The "developed

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[1748] See e.g. translations of key passages in the (Skt.) *Aṣṭa*, "have the *dharma* as their body", "i.e. the *dharma* is their true body", 51; so too 52; "embodied in the *dharma*" in LAn passages, 59; "the *dharma*" (twice) for *Vajra,* 69; "has the *dharma* for a body" in *Samādhirāja* 70; "the *dharma* or *dharmas*" for LAS 78 (ignoring the fact that the passage speaks of *anutpāda,* an characterisation most apt neither to the teaching nor to *buddhadharmas*), 73; "have the *dharma* as their body" for LAS 104, 73; "the *dharma*" for EA, 73; an ambiguous translation for *Kāśyapa-parivarta* 125, 61.

[1749] Harrison seems, in fact, to insist more upon the possibility of reading even *dharma qua* "teaching" in the plural early in his paper, only to lapse into singular later on. For attempts to apply and justify a plural reading, see, for example, his interpretation of the nominal use in SA, 52-53, which clearly refers to the teaching, where Harrison is yet tempted to suggest a plural, presumably in order to fit with his basic interpretative dichotomy; so too the EA passage, 53, that clearly speaks of "hearing" the *dharma*; another passage in EA LXIV, 53; an MSV passage, 55. He fudges the issue of whether *dharma* here is indeed singular or plural, or refers to the teaching or the reality it points to when he says, "all these Āgama citations make a specific identification of the term translated *fashen,* 'body of *dharma*(*s*), with the *dharma* or *dharmas* demonstrated by the Buddha, or with the true *dharma,* i.e. with his teachings or his Teaching considered as a whole", 53-54. Harrison in fact justifies his translation of *dharma* meaning "teaching(s)" in the plural precisely by reference to the plurality of *buddhadharmas* in the Scholastic texts he takes as locus classicus for his interpretation of the nominal uses, 55-56, justifying this move by an anachronistic references to what is most likely a syncretising move in Asaṇga's *Vajracchedikā* commentary, 56, and RGV, 81 n. 47; and further by saying vaguely that "that *dharmas* ("qualities or principles" that make a Buddha) are both taught by the Buddha, in which case we might call them 'teachings' or 'truths', and they are realised in his person, in which case we might call them 'qualities'," 56. This is to ignore the fact that no list of the *buddhadharmas* reads anything like a conspectus of the teachings. The lapse into predominantly singular translation later in the paper is represented in passages cited in the preceding n. 739.

Mahāyāna" interpretation that Harrison opposes to his "Mainstream" interpretation refers to what I will here call the "'classic' metaphysical Mahāyāna" *dharmakāya,* whereby the term expresses a claim or understanding that the Buddha is most veritably embodied in the "absolute".[1750]

Given that Harrison claims that we find no signs of the "developed Mahāyāna" interpretation, the implication is that where *dharmakāya* is an adjective to be translated, with Harrison, "embodied in the *dharma*" etc., *dharma* means "the Dharma" in the sense of the teaching; there are no other candidate meanings to hand.[1751] I have argued, however, that there is little evidence in Lokakṣema's texts that the teaching is meant in the relevant passages, and further, that specific statements made about this *dharma* or in consequence of the Buddha's identification with it is incomprehensible, in many cases, on such a reading.[1752]

[1750] This absolute is labelled, most typically in this context, by the term *dharmatā* or *dharmadhātu,* but also, in various textual and historical contexts, by a range of other terms such as *śūnyatā, bhūtakoṭi, tattva, tathatā,* etc. The precise interpretation of this version of the *dharmakāya* is somewhat muddied by Harrison's presentation of it in terms of characterisations by various secondary scholars he takes as foils. As he rightly points out, these scholars have gone to unjustified extremes in creative interpretation, speaking of a "Cosmic Body", a "primal source or ground", a personalised being of some kind, or an analogue to the Christian Godhead; 44-46, 74-75, 77. However, we should not throw out the baby with the bathwater, and exclude all understandings of *dharmakāya* in terms of genuine Mahāyāna notions of the "absolute" along with these justifiably objectionable misinterpretations thereof.

[1751] See Harrison's reading of the supposed Nikāya antecedents to the concept of *dharmakāya,* 50, where he seems to see the sense of the term *dhamma* as the same in all instances, and to interpret it as referring to the teaching. See also the Āgama citations already noted in n. 1749; his reading of the passage from (Skt.) *Aṣṭa* IV, 57, etc.

[1752] It is notable that most of the passages Harrison is able to cite where the term *dharmakāya* clearly does mean *dharma-* in the sense of "teaching" are from the Āgamas, Vinaya, and *Mil,* 52-55, i.e. a different set of texts again to both the scholastic manuals he rightly draws on for the notion of embodiment in *buddhadharmas* or the Mahāyāna. It is possible that this distribution is significant, and that the notion of *dharmakāya* referring to an identification of the Buddha with his *teachings* is representative of such literature and otherwise somewhat anomalous. The *dharmakāya* as the "body of teachings" in its own right deserves further investigation.

We should note in this connection that the (apparently late, Sanskrit) *Aṣṭa* of course also uses the notion that the Buddhas are embodied in *dharma* (*dharmakāyāḥ*) to justify preference for the *prajñāpāramitā* over relics. In such contexts, it is very clear that *prajñāpāramitā* refers to the written text, which clearly makes the term *dharma* here compatible with a reading of *dharma* in terms of "teaching". However, the term *prajñāpāramitā* is at best ambiguous in this regard, and the text surely plays on this ambiguity to lend to the written text a supreme value and authority that actually belongs to

Thus, it seems that Harrison's actual (implicit) understanding of the content of the "Mainstream *dharmakāya*" is that it refers to embodiment either in multiple qualities (*dharma*) or in the teaching/s (variably singular or perhaps plural). He summarises his claims for the status of this *dharmakāya* in the case of *Aṣṭa,* which has most closely concerned us here, by saying,

> "My contention is, then, that even in the later Sanskrit text of the *AsPP* (=*Aṣṭa*) . . . *dharmakāya* . . . is perfectly comprehensible in terms of the multivalent Mainstream interpretation of the word, as the body or collection of qualities, principles, truths or teachings. Elsewhere it appears as an adjective, a usage which is also found in Mainstream sources . . . . Therefore there is no real support for [Lewis] Lancaster's

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prajñāpāramitā in a prior sense that far exceeds the notion of a discourse or text. See, for example, the statements cited above p. 773 about the relation of *prajñāpāramitā* to *sarvadharma* ("all things") as their ground, as permeating or immanent in them all, etc., which are already present in Lokakṣema's version of the text.

Harrison also reads *Aṣṭa* "passage no. 2" (Skt. Ch. IV) in terms of the *dharma* as "teachings"; 57. This passage states that the authority of the preacher of the *dharma* (*dharmabhāṇaka*) derives from the *dharma* just as the authority of a king's representative derives from the authority of the king ("king's representative" for *rājapuruṣa,* Harrison's translation; Conze merely gives "king", 118; see de Jong's correction of Conze's translation in his "Notes", 111). But the context clearly shows that the true object of the analogy here is the *prajñāpāramitā* as the source of all genuine spiritual authority and power, and once again, the terms in which *prajñāpāramitā* is spoken of show clearly that it cannot be understood merely as a teaching (cf. parallels between the process of derivation of both the king's authority the preachers' authority with what is asserted when the text says, "So too it is with the qualities of *prajñāpāramitā* and *sarvajñajñāna* . . . (*evam eva* [as a basket is valued because of a previous gem it held] *prajñāpāramitāyā ete guṇāḥ sarvajñajñānasya ca* [on Conze's erroneous translation here, see de Jong, "Notes" 111; but I suspect that that de Jong is surely himself incorrect in turn when he translates *sarvajñāna* as "the all-knowing *one*"]); on account of which (*yena,* i.e. of *sarvajñajñāna*, sg.) the relics of the Tathāgata who has entered *parinirvāṇa* are worshipped; for they are the true repositories of *sarvajñajñāna*", *yena parinirvṛtasyāpi tathāgatasyārhataḥ samyaksaṁbuddhasya tāni tathāgataśarīrāṇi pūjāṁ labhante, sarvajñajñānasyemāni tathāgataśarīrāṇi bhājanabhūtāny abhūvann iti).* In fact, when the text here speaks most clearly of the teaching, as it might be distinguished from the reality to which it points, it even clearly demotes it to a status second to and derivative from *prajñāpāramitā,* and therefore the *dharmakāya* itself: "As the demonstration of *dharma* in all world systems by the Buddhas and Lords should be worshipped [only] because it has come forth from the *prajñāpāramitā* [i.e. not in its own intrinsic right], so also the dharma-preacher's demonstration of *dharma . . . .* the preacher of *dharma* should be worshipped because of the authority of the *dharmakāya,* in virtue of which he gives courage to a great body of people" (*yathā ca bhagavan sarvalokadhātuṣu buddhānāṁ bhagavatāṁ dharmadeśanā prajñāpāramitānirjātatvāt pūjyā, evaṁ dharmabhāṇakasya dharmadeśanā prajñāpāramitānirjātatvāt pūjyā . . . . dharmabhāṇako dharmakāyānubhāvān mahato janakāyasya akutobhayaḥ pūjyaḥ*). It makes no sense to claim that the term *dharmakāya* means "body of (the) teaching(s)" in application to this passage that says the authority of the teachings is only *derivative from* the *dharmakāya*; this would amount to saying that the authority of the teachings is merely derivative because they are in fact derived *from the teachings themselves*. For these passages, see Vaidya 50.10-17, Conze 118.

> contention[1753] that the *dharmakāya* is one of the specifically Mahāyāna doctrines inserted into the text of the *AsPP* in the course of its development . . ."[1754]

Elsewhere, Harrison makes it clear that he also intends this contention to apply to all the texts of Lokakṣema,[1755] and even to the bulk of "early and middle" Mahāyāna literature.[1756]

On the basis of the research presented in this dissertation, I disagree. In making this claim, Harrison greatly overgeneralises conclusions that in fact have limited validity for only some of the various contexts and passages he covers. My disagreement with Harrison's thesis can be broken down into disagreements with several subsidiary claims. Harrison's thesis understands that the "Mainstream" interpretation:

a) reaches back into the Pāli literature;[1757]
b) understands *dharmakāya* not as *a* "hypostasised"[1758] body of *dharma,* but embodiment in *dharmas;*
c) sees those *dharmas* as plural, and interprets this plural *dharma-* as referring primarily either to *dharma* as the teaching(s), or as the "Buddha *dharmas*" that make up buddhahood; and
d) emphatically excludes the "unitary",[1759] "metaphysical",[1760] "abstract"[1761] sense ascribed to it in later Mahāyāna and especially *trikāya* contexts.

[1753] Referring to the section of Lancaster, diss. on the *dharmakāya.*

[1754] Harrison, "Real Phantom Body" 58.

[1755] "In the small group of texts translated by Lokakṣema . . . there is no evidence for any developed Mahāyāna notions of *dharmakāya*," 67.

[1756] "At least as far as the early and middle Mahāyāna are concerned, there is little in the texts I have studied to suggest a departure from Mainstream interpretations," 73.

[1757] Harrison, "Real Phantom Body" 50.

[1758] Harrison, "Real Phantom Body" 74.

First, there is no strong evidence that any later conception of *dhammakāya* is present in the Pāli canon. I already presented arguments to this effect in Chapter 3.2 above, and will not repeat them here. This means there are no solid grounds for Harrison's apparent confidence that his "Mainstream" understanding is adopted into the early Mahāyāna texts from a pre-existing Mainstream context,[1762] because we simply have no evidence of any context in which any of the post-Pāli-canonical concepts of *dharmakāya* can be shown to predate the early Lokakṣema translations Harrison studies.[1763] This means that all chronological bets are off. Lokakṣema's Prajñāpāramitā, or any other Mahāyāna context in which these ideas are found, could as easily be their breeding ground as any Mainstream context.[1764] Thus, the evidence forces us to reject

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[1759] Harrison, "Real Phantom Body" 48, 49, 74.

[1760] Harrison, "Real Phantom Body" 74.

[1761] Harrison, "Real Phantom Body" 74.

[1762] See below, p. 725, for reasons also to doubt Harrison's confidence that the apparent quotation of a "Mainstream" text in the extant Sanskrit *Aṣṭa* constitutes evidence of such borrowing from a prior Mainstream source.

[1763] In addition to the handful of putative Pāli-canonical antecedents, Harrison cites Āgama sources, the *Milindapañha,* the *Mūlasarvâstivādavinaya,* and the *Abhidharmakośa* as sources for this interpretation; Harrison, "Real Phantom Body" 52-56. However, despite the fact that all of these sources carry Mainstream doxographical associations, and further, that the Āgamas, in particular, are certainly in parts very old, none of our extant versions of them are datable earlier than the Mahāyāna sources we study here. In fact, many of them are considerably later, and we might well suspect, in light of the absence of similar notions from Pāli materials, that the *dharmakāya* passages Harrison points to in them, rather than constituting evidence for an early notion of the *dharmakāya,* simply constitutes one more respect in which these texts were clearly open to the new ideas current through the period of their redaction, transmission and (in some cases) translation.

[1764] It remains true, as we will see later (see esp. Ch. 4.4), that *some* understandings of the Buddha's embodiment, whether named *dharmakāya* or otherwise, are *shared* with Sarvâstivāda sources in particular (which Harrison also terms "Mainstream"). Insofar as we might define the term "Mainstream" to mean all materials which are shared between Mahāyāna and non-Mahāyāna texts, the understanding of the Buddha as embodied in the *buddhadharmas,* in particular, can justifiably still be called Mainstream, so long as we attach to that term no prejudice that the ideas concerned could not have originated in Mahāyāna contexts. But we certainly cannot, on the basis of our extant record, attributed any chronological significance to the fact that ideas are so shared between Mahāyāna and non-Mahāyāna contexts where evidence for the ideas in both contexts is equally old.

the implication conveyed by Harrison's use of the term "Mainstream" to describe understandings shared between Mainstream and Mahāyāna sources that those ideas necessarily derive *from* the Mainstream. We must also reject the implication he conveys by his tracing of these ideas back to putative Pāli-canonical or Āgama sources that these ideas are necessarily older than other conceptions of the Buddha's bodies.

Further, it is also untrue that the contents Harrison identifies under the head of his "Mainstream *dharmakāya* are the only conceptions of the Buddha's embodiments we encounter in the texts he studies, and that there is no sign in those texts of the "classic" Mahāyāna metaphysical *dharmakāya*. Rather, as the preceding two sections of this dissertation have shown in detail: (1) there are indeed significant elements and precursors of a nascent "classic" Mahāyāna metaphysical concept of the *dharmakāya* in the Lokakṣema corpus, and even in his *Aṣṭa,* though not yet by the *name* of *dharmakāya*; (2) that the elements of this understanding are already clearly spoken of under the name of *dharmakāya* by the time of Mokṣala's version of the *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā,* translated in 291 C.E.[1765] Thus, the "classic" Mahāyāna metaphysical understanding of the nature of buddhahood is in significant degree copresent with what Harrison calls the "Mainstream" interpretation of *dharmakāya* as embodiment in plural *buddhadharmas* right from the inception of our record of the Prajñāpāramitā literature. At least so far as our record can tell us, this Mahāyāna interpretation cannot therefore shown any later or newer than the "Mainstream" interpretation.

In fact, I suspect that Harrison's tendency to lapse back into the singular ("embodied in the *dharma*") when translating the adjectival use of *dharmakāya* indicates that even he finds it difficult to consistently imagine that it always applies to "the Dharma" *qua* teaching. He seems

[1765] See also Ch. 4.5 for further early instances of the *dharmakāya* so-named, around the same period as Mokṣala himself.

by this translation to half-recognise that something more than just the teaching is at stake. As we have seen, this difficulty is highlighted by a number of statements about "embodiment in the *dharma*" and its consequences, or about "the *dharma*", all *dharmas, dharmadhātu, dharmatā* etc. in clearly related senses and contexts,[1766] such as: that in virtue of the *dharma* or *dharmakāya*, the Tathāgata does not "come or go";[1767] that the Buddhas are all one in virtue of it;[1768] that it, or anyone who understands it, is somehow like space;[1769] that it neither increases nor decreases;[1770] that it is not knowable to ordinary consciousness;[1771] that it is mastered in virtue of insight into the lack of self of (all) *dharmas* (*dharmanairātmyadarśanāt*);[1772] that it is "unarisen" (*anutpāda*);[1773] and so forth.[1774] I have argued extensively that the most consistent way to understand these and other aspects of the way the texts speak of *dharmakāya,* or related concepts like *dharmatā, dharmadhātu,* the pertinent dimension of all *dharmas,* is precisely in terms of an emergent notion of the Mahāyāna "metaphysical" absolute. This is precisely the interpretation Harrison works so hard to exclude.

1766 Many of these statements are cited by Harrison himself, without any apparent awareness of difficulty or contradiction, as I will show in the following by citing them from his paper.

1767 Harrison, "Real Phantom Body" 51-52.

1768 Harrison, "Real Phantom Body" 59, 62, 72.

1769 Harrison, "Real Phantom Body" 60.

1770 Harrison, "Real Phantom Body" 63.

1771 Harrison, "Real Phantom Body" 68, citing *Vaj*.

1772 Harrison, "Real Phantom Body" 71.

1773 Harrison, "Real Phantom Body" 72.

1774 See further, for detailed criticisms of Harrison's readings on this point, n. 1695.

In sum, then, Harrison's "Mainstream" reading is at no stage of our record a monopoly of "Mainstream" texts, and may not originate in the Mainstream. It does not necessarily predate other conceptions of the *dharmakāya.* Rather, at all stages of the literature, beginning with Lokakṣema, it certainly coexists alongside the clearly discernible outlines of the emergent Mahāyāna understanding.

Harrison states that he "sees [his] paper . . . as yet another attempt at what I might call the abolition of imaginary discontinuities in Buddhist history".[1775] In general, this is a worthwhile goal. However, a sober review of the points on which Harrison's thesis requires correction in fact shows that his article constructs imaginary *continuities.* These imaginary continuities are between two terms that are themselves as much "phantoms" as the vision of the *dharmakāya* conjured up by Harrison's foils (1) a supposedly earlier "Mainstream" reading, which cannot be shown to predate his Mahāyāna sources; and (2) an interpretation of *dharmakāya* in early Mahāyāna contexts which is not necessarily an accurate or exhaustive characterisation of the real ideas at play. The real "phantom body" of the piece, therefore, may be Harrison's "Mainstream" *dharmakāya,* rather than the "classic" Mahāyāna metaphysical reading he sets out somewhat overenthusiastically to depose.

[1775] Harrison, "Real Phantom Body" 73.

Chapter 4.4 Ideas of embodiment in the Sarvâstivāda, with special reference to the **Mahāvibhāṣā*

4.4.1 Introduction

It has been typical of past studies on the embodiments of the Buddha, and indeed, of Buddhist studies more generally, to assume (1) that "Schools" ideas, including those of the Sarvâstivāda, predate Mahāyāna materials on the whole; and (2) that where ideas are found in both "Schools" and Mahāyāna texts, the direction of borrowing and influence must be from the Schools to the Mahāyāna. In the case of bodies doctrines, specifically, this has resulted in an understanding that a "two-body" doctrine purported to be found in Sarvâstivādin texts,[1776] whereby the Buddha is supposed to "have" a *dharmakāya* and a *rūpakāya,* most probably originated in the Sarvâstivāda or broader schools context (or, on occasion, it is even imagined to reach back to the Nikāyas and Āgamas[1777]), and was merely accepted passively, perhaps with a certain reorientation of emphasis or certain polemic variations, by the early Mahāyāna contexts in which it is supposed to be found, including, most notably for our present purposes, the Prajñāpāramitā.[1778]

[1776] One significant departure from this general pattern is la Vallée Poussin, who presents Sarvâstivāda Abhidharma as propounding a theory of *three* bodies; "Appendice" 766-773. However, I will argue below that his claim that the Sarvâstivāda recognise *nirmāṇakāya* as a body of the Buddha is flawed; see §4.4.10.

[1777] If, as I showed in Chapter 3.2, the evidence for a supposed *dhammakāya* in the Pāli canon is very slender and inconclusive, at best, the situation for the *rūpakāya* is much clearer – there is simply no concept of **rūpakāya* in the Pāli canon, though this does not seem to prevent scholars from sometimes assuming there must be.

[1778] Of course, such generalisations cannot accurately capture the individual positions of all scholars precisely, and scholars differ slightly in their interpretations; but I believe this is a fair characterisation of the standard account found in a number of works. The idea that the Sarvâstivāda Abhidharma position preceded and influenced Prajñāpāramitā, and that the latter must have taken its supposed two-body theory from the former, is often implicit in the order of presentation of histories of ideas. The scholars whose arguments embody the position I take as my foil here include: Takeuchi Shōkō, "Buddakan" 160-162, where the order of presentation implies Sarvâstivāda Abhidharma precedence to Prajñāpāramitā; Habito, "Busshinron" 4-5; Makransky, *Buddhahood Embodied* Ch 2 and 3, where the order of presentation at least implies Sarvâstivāda Abhidharma precedence to Prajñāpāramitā; Guang Xing, *Concept of the Buddha*, Ch. 2, infra. One significant if enigmatic variation is found in Nagao Gadjin, "On the Theory", which does not even mention how he understands Sarvâstivāda to fit into the picture, but

In this section of this dissertation, I will argue that this understanding is flawed for three main reasons. First, it is flawed in that even where Sarvâstivāda doctrines do posit two (main) bodies, they are not best characterised by the usual representations of that theory. Second, it is flawed because it essentialises Sarvâstivāda, and imagines that there is a single doctrine of Buddha bodies in the texts of that school that can be captured in such a simplistic generalisation. In fact, there is immense variation across the texts in the way they think and speak of the bodies of the Buddha, and a text like *Saṃgītiparyāya,* for instance, seems not even to be interested in the problem of embodiments at all. Third, it is flawed in that the relations it imagines obtaining between "Schools" sources and early Mahāyāna sources simply cannot be proven to be true to fact, a problem which applies equally to the relation between Sarvâstivādin and early Prajñāpāramitā sources, which concern us more specifically here.

My first task in this introduction will be to lay out the reasons that this fourth component of the received view is flawed, and that usual assumptions about relative dating and influence do not stand up to scrutiny.

It is first quite notably the case that we have no evidence that any "Schools" material as we have them in our extant sources, including Sarvâstivādin doctrines, do indeed predate our earliest Mahāyāna sources, including our earliest Prajñāpāramitā sources. This fact can be made clear by considering (1) evidence for and assessments of dates likely for the earliest

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rather presents the two-body theory (within the "one-two-three" model, which Gadjin still endorses) as entirely a Mahāyāna, and predominantly Prajñāpāramitā, innovation, 26; he also implies, primarily on the basis of the ascription of MPPŚ to Nāgārjuna, that Nāgārjuna must have been instrumental in its elaboration; 30; Gadjin's presentation, however, is so generalised and ahistorical, and so seldom grounded in citation of actual texts, that it is difficult to know where to begin criticising it. Another variant on this theme is found in Habito, who seems further to regard the true two-body theory as an invention of the Prajñāpāramitā literature, "Busshinron" 5, and implies therefore that Sarvâstivāda merely prepares the ground.

Prajñāpāramitā; and (2) evidence for and assessments of likely dates for early Sarvâstivāda sources. I will here consider these problems in turn for the case of the relation between Sarvâstivāda and Prajñāpāramitā specifically, but the arguments also apply, *mutatis mutandis,* for almost the relation between almost any "Schools" material and our earliest Mahāyāna sources, a fact which, as we have seen above, is also relevant for consideration of the relation between Mahāsāṃghika/Lokôttaravada and early Mahāyāna ideas.

Of course, our starting point for dating the inception of Prajñāpāramitā ideas must be precisely the *Aṣṭa* of Lokakṣema of 179 C.E., which serves as a *terminus ad quem.* It is often observed, further, that the doctrines of this text are already quite developed, and that the text must have undergone some period of evolution to reach even the stage represented by the Lokakṣema version. Thus, if the *terminus ante quem* for the composition of Lokakṣema's *Aṣṭa* itself is 125-150 C.E.,[1779] it seems likely, even on a conservative view, that some form of Prajñāpāramitā literature must date back at least to the latter part of the first century C.E., though we cannot of course extend this general assurance to any specific ideas within the corpus, even those found in Lokakṣema.

Little can be said for certain beyond this general starting point, though a range of scholarly opinions have been advanced.[1780] For some scholars, it is thought (naturally enough, given the Lokakṣema version) that *Aṣṭa* itself is probably the oldest extant text in the corpus.[1781] On the other hand, despite the fact that there is no Chinese translation of it until Kumārajīva at the

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[1779] See Fronsdal diss, 105.

[1780] Many key opinions have been conveniently summarised by Hanayama Shōyū, "Summary of Various Research", and Nakamura Hajime, "Critical Survey".

[1781] For the distinction between the oldest extant text and the "original" (or Ur-)text, see Hanayama 46.

beginning of the fifth century, other scholars have also seen the possibility that the *Vajracchedikā* ("Diamond)is the oldest text in the corpus, for a variety of thought-provoking if not decisive reasons.[1782] Whichever of these texts they champion, or indeed, in some cases where some other hypothetical Ur-text is posited, scholars have proposed a range of dates for the origins of this literature, beginning as early as the second century B.C.E. and ranging through to dates about as late as are conceivable in light of the Lokakṣema *Aṣṭa.*[1783] The reasons advanced for these views are usually slender, however, and in the balance, there is little consensus beyond what can be established by conservative extrapolation from the dates of Lokakṣema's *Aṣṭa* itself.

Even on such a conservative basis, however, we have seen that the ideas found in Lokakṣema's *Aṣṭa* can be ascribed with reasonable conference to the time around 100 C.E. This is very early, and I can see no reason for confidence that anything (especially anything about bodies) in our extant Sarvâstivāda texts is any earlier.

[1782] Nakamura seems to be of this view, because the text has a style of frame-narrative that seems to be relatively old, including the fact that it presents itself as preached to 1250 monks at Jetavana, "Critical Survey" 65. Hikata Ryūshō argues for a first century CE Ur-text; Hanayama 62. Hanayama cites other arguments by Nakamura arguing for its antiquity on the basis of its doctrine of the *dharmakāya*, 61; but he is not prepared, even on the basis of these arguments, to argue for a date any earlier than the second century CE. Ui Hakuju gives several perceptive reasons to think the text early, including that it does not use the term *śūnyatā* (*kong* 空); that it seems only in one case to assume a written culture of texts; that it does not use the term "Mahāyāna", but rather *bodhisattvayāna*; Hanayama 56-58. Ui also adduces a somewhat dubious and vague connection to Nāgārjuna, and notes citations from it in Dharmarakṣa's translations, Hanayama 59-60. Even on the basis of these careful arguments, however, it is notable that Ui is only prepared to argue for quite a conservative, late date, approx. 150-200 CE. I do not know how to explain the contradiction between this date and Hanayama's claim that Ui thinks the "Small" *sūtra* was composed around 50 CE; 55. Kasugai Shin'ya uses the fact that *Vaj* "does not clearly show any direct intercourse" with other Praj. *sūtras* to argue that it may not belong to the earliest period, but in fact, it seems more likely that this fact, also, could be adduced as evidence that it was composed in a period when they did not exist; Hanayama 75. Gregory Schopen has shown himself quite enthusiastic about the possibility that some of these arguments, and other observations of his own, might show *Vaj.* to be older that *Aṣṭa*, "The Phrase" 31-32, 55 n. 16, 17.

[1783] Nakamura cites Yamada Ryūjō for the very earliest date, Nakamura, "Critical Survey" 67; as does Hanayama, but on the basis of hearsay only, "Various Research" 55. Conze proposes, without saying exactly why, 100 BCE to 100 CE for the origins of this literature, *Praj. Lit.* 1; Ui Hakuju proposes 50 CE for the "Small" *sūtra,* which for him is apparently identifiable with *Vaj.*, Hanayama 55.

When we turn to examine the evidence for the date of Sarvâstivāda literature, the first impediment we encounter is that the earliest Chinese translation we have of any of these texts are the Saṃghavarman and Zhu Fonian translation of the **Aṣṭaskandhaśāstra* (=*Jñānaprasthāna*) of 383;[1784] the earlier *Vibhāṣā* (the **Vibhāṣāśāstra*) by *Saṃghabhūti, also in 383 (apparently only partial; see below),[1785] and by Buddhavarman in 437;[1786] and one other translation (of the *Prakaraṇapāda*) by Gunabhadra and Buddhayaśas.[1787] Even these early versions of the texts thus date to the time around 400 C.E. Otherwise, none of the core texts of the school were translated into Chinese before Xuanzang.[1788] While it is of course clear that the Sarvâstivāda as a school is much older than these Chinese translations,[1789] we must also recognise, as I will argue below in greater detail and more specifically for the ideas that concern us here, that large and compendious texts like the *Vibhāṣā* texts, in particular, may have grown and changed over time. If we extrapolate such a process of hypothetical textual growth back in time, it is difficult to see, in the case of any given single passage or idea in the text, how we can be confident that it belonged to the text from its very inception, and that it was not added later on. Thus, our extant textual record provides us with only a very shaky basis upon which to suppose the

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1784 阿毘曇八犍度論, T1543.

1785 鞞婆沙論, T1547.

1786 阿毘曇毘婆沙論, T1546.

1787 I.e. the *Prakaraṇa-pāda* 眾事分阿毘曇論 T1541.

1788 Note, in addition, that it is possible, according to Ulrich Kragh, that Paramārtha's *Lishi Apitan lun* 立世阿毘曇論 (**Lokaprajñaptyabhidharma,* T1644), may somehow be related to the *Lokaprajñapti* chapter of the *Prajñaptiśāstra,* which is missing from the Song Chinese translation. Ulrich Kragh, s.v. "Shishe lun" 施設論, DDB. Accessed April 6, 2007.

1789 E.g. from inscriptional evidence. However, the mere fact that inscriptions attest to the existence of a school called Sarvâstivāda clearly does not entitle us to assume that the school so identified propounds any specific individual theory found in the much later extant versions of their texts.

priority of any of the ideas in the Sarvâstivāda texts, even if we could be confident that a prototypical Indic form of the text had in fact been earlier than Prajñāpāramitā.

To make matters worse, however, we in fact have no grounds for such confidence that the originals of these texts were earlier than the Prajñāpāramitā, especially in the case of the text(s) called *Vibhāṣā* (hereafter *Vibh*), which is usually the standard point of reference for scholars interested in early Sarvâstivādin ideas (though reference is often made, of course, to Vasubandhu's *Abhidharmakośa* for later phases of the doctrine). First, *Vibh* was traditionally held thought to date from around or after the time of the Kuṣāna King Kaniṣka,[1790] which would place it in the second century C.E. at the earliest. However, as we have just seen, even this traditional date would certainly not make it early enough to antedate the version of *Aṣṭa* attested in Lokakṣema's translation. In addition, the traditional date is highly unreliable and cannot be followed. The modern scholarly consensus is that while a relative chronology of the texts can be arrived at with some degree of reliability, the absolute date of each text, and even the bulk of the corpus as a whole, cannot be determined with an accuracy beyond the very late dates *terminus ad quem* provided by the Chinese translations.[1791]

There are, of course, other texts, including most notably the *Jñānaprasthāna* (hereafter JñP), upon which *Vibh* itself is a commentary, and also six other core texts of the Sarvâstivāda school, that are generally thought earlier than the *Vibh* itself. However, the information given us by

[1790] See e.g. Demiéville, "L'origine" 24, fn. b. The text mentions him: 昔健馱羅國迦膩色迦王, T1545.593a15. Cited in Onishi, 169. Of course, once more, by the same token as arguments already advanced in the opposite direction, if we suppose that it was possible for material to be added and for the text to grow over time, then it is also possible that parts of the text would predate Kaniṣka even if this sentence is present in one part of it, and therefore that some of its ideas might indeed predate Praj. nonetheless.

[1791] On reasons absolute dates are impossible to arrive at with any further accuracy, see further Willemen, Dessein and Cox 166-167.

later traditions notwithstanding,[1792] we do not really know how much earlier these texts might be. Given the range of earlier dates that we saw are proposed by some scholars for the inception of the Prajñāpāramitā literature itself, then, even where we hypothetically might, for example, find a certain idea of embodiment in both the apparently very early *Saṃgītiparyāya*[1793] and also in Prajñāpāramitā as represented by the *Aṣṭa,* we would have no way to be sure that the Sarvâstivāda source was earlier, and therefore no way of determining on chronological grounds alone that the Sarvâstivāda usage was *a priori* the original and the Prajñāpāramitā the borrowing. Further, we will also see below that the chronological relation between these earlier texts and Prajñāpāramitā, besides being undecideable, is also largely irrelevant, since they contain surprisingly little evidence of interest in the Buddha's bodies.

Further, it is difficult to show on internal grounds that the Prajñāpāramitā is indeed, as is commonly claimed, reacting to Sarvâstivādin ideas. The predominance of this stereotype in the field, and also the difficulty of actually proving its veracity, has been shown by Onishi Yoshinori.[1794] Onishi looks for signs of reaction to, or even awareness of, a number of specifically and identifiably Sarvâstivāda doctrines in the early Prajñāpāramitā, including the idea of *dharmas* as basic building-blocks of reality with substantial existence (*dravyasat*), the "real existence of all phenomena in all three time-periods", various doctrinal lists, the application of the twelvefold *pratītyasamutpāda* to biological life, and a notion of transformation that may have underlain the eventual conception of the transference of merit. He concludes that there is no strong evidence that Prajñāpāramitā is indeed reacting to Sarvâstivāda ideas;

[1792] For a summary of these traditions (presented somewhat too trustingly as unproblematic fact), see Onishi 169.

[1793] 阿毘達磨集異門足論 T1536.

[1794] In his article "Is the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra* Really Arguing against the Sarvāstivādins?"

the only "meagre" signs of such a possibility are that it does criticise the idea of real existence in three times, and that it may owe something to Sarvâstivāda in its notion of merit.[1795] Thus, it seems that quite apart from the considerations of what might be chronologically possible given the little we know about the dates of the texts themselves, there is also little concrete internal evidence in the contents of the texts to show precedence of Sarvâstivāda over Prajñāpāramitā (or, of course, in principle, vice versa).

In addition to these arguments from Onishi, we might mention here a proposal made by Akanuma Chizen,[1796] on the basis of a sentence in the *Vibhāṣā* itself stating that "The teaching of the Prajñā is called *vaipulya*",[1797] that Prajñāpāramitā in fact *precedes* at least that important Sarvâstivāda text.[1798] While I do not think we can follow Akanuma in the quite far-reaching conclusions he reportedly draws from this small fact,[1799] it certainly serves to show that the chronological relations between Prajñāpāramitā and Sarvâstivāda texts may be more complex than has sometimes been assumed.

1795 Onishi, "Is the *Aṣṭa . . .*" 180, 179.

1796 Cited in Hanayama, "Various Research" 55.

1797 此中般若說名方廣, T1545.660a29.

1798 Note that this would not necessarily make it prior to all Sarvâstivādin literature; it could still be later than the *Jñānaprasthāna,* the root text upon which *Vibh* is a commentary, and also, of course, than others among the seven main texts in the Sarvâstivāda corpus (which I will list below). However, given that scholars who advocate the narrative whereby a two-body theory originates in the "Schools" and then is adopted by early Mahāyāna often cite the *Vibhāṣā* as evidence for the "Schools" component of the narrative, Akanuma's proposal could certainly upset some applecarts.

1799 According to Hanayama's summary, Akanuma assumes that the entirety of *Vibh* was composed and closed very early (125-150 CE). I do not see any *a priori* reason for such confidence that the text did not continue to grow and absorb new material and ideas for some time afterwards. Akanuma further assumes that the Prajñāpāramitā was reacting to Sarvâstivāda, and thus, on the basis of a chain of inference whereby the first Praj literature responds to the *Jñānaprasthāna* and the *Vibhāṣā* then mentions Praj, infers a date for the earliest Praj of "10-60 A.D." Such precision is simply unattainable on the basis of our facts.

In sum, then, there are no sound reasons in what we know about the relative chronology of the two tendencies in Buddhist thought, and there is also very little in the contents of their respective systems, that allows us to judge confidently the direction of influence or borrowing where we find the same ideas in both Sarvâstivāda and Prajñāpāramitā contexts. As we have already noted, the traditional view in scholarship on the question has been that early Mahāyāna, as represented by early Prajñāpāramitā, took a "two-body" understanding of the Buddha's embodiments from Mainstream Buddhism. As I also had occasion to argue at length in Chapter 3.2, however, no sign of any such view can be found in the Pāli canon, which means that if such a model of embodiment *had* been taken into Mahāyāna from the Mainstream, it would most likely have to have been taken from "Schools" texts. Thus, almost the only possible Mainstream "source" of this idea cannot be shown, either on chronological grounds nor from any internal evidence of definite influence or borrowing, to necessarily have its source in the Mainstream at all, rather than the early Mahāyāna texts themselves.

Once we thus strip away the possibility of objective supports for the presupposition that shared ideas must originate in the Mainstream (e.g. in the Schools) and flow from them to the Mahāyāna, we are confronted with the possibility that this presupposition may also rest in part on the stereotype that Mahāyāna texts were innovative and open, whereas Mainstream texts were conservative and closed, so that Mahāyāna texts were likely to pick up any new ideas floating about in jackdaw fashion, whereas Mainstream texts would probably jealously guard their frontiers against the very possibility of change. There may indeed be a general difference in tendency to justify this impression. But as a basis for determining the dynamics of conceptual history in cases where we otherwise have no evidence either way, this stereotype seems questionable at best. Even the Āgamas contain numerous examples of apparent acceptance of new ideas, as is evidenced, for example, by some of the very concepts we have

studied here – such as the intrusion of the *dharmakāya* into contexts where it was previously unknown, or of the corporeal rereading of the notion of *sôpadhiśeṣa-* and *nirupadhiśeṣanirvāṇadhātu.* Even if it is true in general, then, that a greater number of new ideas, and more flamboyant ones, are typically found in Mahāyāna texts than in Mainstream ones, the existence of clear exceptions makes it impossible to assume on that basis alone to that in any specific case, Mainstream sources cannot be adopting innovative concepts from Mahāyāna sources.

For these reasons, even for those ideas of embodiment that are indeed shared between Mainstream and Mahāyāna sources, we cannot be sure that those ideas originate in the Mainstream. This is the first problem with the received conception of a two-body, *dharmakāya/rūpakāya* model of embodiment that is supposedly received passively by early Mahāyāna from the Sarvâstivāda. This standard understanding, however, also has a second central flaw, which is that it is not in fact true that Sarvâstivāda, as represented by the seminal *Vibh,* propounds such a two-body model.

A central task of this section of this dissertation will thus be to combat the misconception that *Vibh* propounds a twofold *dharmakāya/rūpakāya* model of the embodiments of the Buddha. I will argue in detail below that the actual landscape of ideas about the Buddha and his bodies in this text is considerably more complex than this stereotype will suggest; but I will also argue, negatively, that in this text at least, *rūpakāya* is not, properly speaking, a body "of the Buddha" at all. It is rather the term that is most typically used for the ordinary body of all sentient beings. The Buddha has a *rūpakāya,* therefore, only insofar as he shares dimensions of his being with ordinary sentient beings – and, given the radically extraordinary nature of a Buddha, in virtue of which a Buddha has very little in common with ordinary denizens of *saṃsāra*, it should

not surprise us too much that even in this stereotypically conservative and sober context, this means that there is, if anything, a consistent pattern whereby the *rūpakāya* is *dissociated* from the Buddha. Rather, we discover on close examination of the text that in the case of the Buddha, the ordinary physical body of the Buddha, in opposition to his *dharmakāya,* is referred to as the "birth body" (生身), or "the body born of father and mother", etc.

On the other side of the stereotypical twofold *rūpakāya/dharmakāya* model usually ascribed to Sarvâstivāda, I will argue that while it is true that a *dharmakāya* is indeed ascribed to the Buddha in *Vibh* and other key texts, the specific conception of the *dharmakāya* that is found there has also been misconstrued to some degree in the secondary literature to date. In making these arguments, I am fortunate in being able to follow the excellent and meticulous work of John Makransky, who himself follows the great la Vallée Poussin. As Makransky has argued, at the core of the Sarvâstivādin conception of the *dharmakāya* is the idea that the Buddha is embodied in *bodhi* – a *bodhi* which is further (sometimes) parsed in terms of specific kinds of *jñana* and the five "pure aggregates" understood as the "attendants" of *bodhi.* This accurate characterisation of at least part of the Sarvâstivāda doctrine of *dharmakāya* already represents a significant advance over views in the field previously that have tended to portray it as comprising rather the eighteen *āveṇikadharma* ("unique qualities") or the *anāsravaskandhas/aśaikṣadharmas* of a Buddha, conceptions which are accurate as far as they go, but fail to delve beneath the surface of the doctrine to its driving motives.

On the basis of this corrected factual account of the actual understanding of *dharmakāya* in this literature, I will further suggest, in light of findings from elsewhere in this study, that this doctrine of *dharmakāya* as embodiment in *bodhi* makes the Sarvâstivādin notion of embodiment a part of a hitherto unnoticed broader pattern in early Common-Era doctrines of the Buddha's

embodiments in Buddhism generally. That is to say, on the one hand, I will link it to the doctrines of gnosis as the Buddha's most veritable embodiment found in Lokakṣema's *Aṣṭa* in Chapter 4.3. On the other hand, I will also link it to the ideas we glimpsed in the early Common-Era understanding of relics, as it emerged from our reading of the Senavarma Inscription.

In light of this broader pattern, I will go on to suggest, in the conclusion to this chapter, that we can go some way towards penetrating the cloud of unknowing that enshrouds the phase of development of Buddha-body doctrines that intercedes between the close of the Pāli canon and the dawn of our Chinese record, which in this study I habitually refer to as the "chronological black box". The key to this possibility is provided by the Senavarma Inscription, whose relevance to the study of the history of ideas about embodiments of the Buddha has hitherto been obstructed from view by the twin obstacles of the failure to think of relics as "bodies" on the same plane as rarified entities like the *dharmakāya,* on the one hand, and the only recent discovery and ongoing textual difficulty of the inscription itself, on the other. In the broader perspective, it is quite notable that three somewhat varying conceptions of embodiment across apparently quite differing contexts – reliquary inscriptions, the scholarship of schoolmen, and the gnostic contemplation of the *prajñāpāramitā* – all evince the same central conceit, that the Buddha's gnosis is somehow bound up with his veritable embodiment in and for the world. The observation that this conception is shared across several contexts still does not allow us to locate its source in one body of texts and materials or another, but its broad distribution does suggest that it was already the common property of Buddhist cultures and systems in general in this period, and that it may be folly, on the basis of our record, to attempt to pinpoint its origin in one place or another.

Further, it even seems possible that the concrete date of the Senavarma Inscription allows us to date this idea quite precisely. The Senavarma Inscription may thus conversely provide a piece of unexpected and suggestive (if not conclusive) evidence that *both* the Sarvâstivāda and the Prajñāpāramitā are brainchildren of the first century C.E., as has been suggested separately on different grounds for each.

In closing this introduction to my study of the Sarvâstivāda materials, I must finally say a few words about my choice of texts, my working method, and the consequent limitations of this part of my study.

As I have already mentioned, and as is well known, the Sarvâstivāda has left to us a large literature with its own complex internal history, the earliest part of which literature is almost entirely extant only in Chinese. On internal evidence, it is thought that seven works are earlier than *Vibh*. They are the six "limbs" of the Sarvâstivāda (more literally, "feet", Skt. **ṣaṭpādaśāstra, ṣaṭpādâbhidharma* Ch. 六足論, 六足阿毘曇, 六分阿毘曇), to which the *Jñānaprasthāna* is the torso or trunk[1800]), in approximate chronological order:[1801]

Saṃgītiparyāya (阿毘達磨論, T1536);[1802]

[1800] See e.g. Kuiji's postface to the *Dhātukāya* speaking of the "six feet *of the Jñānaprasthāna, T*1540.625c09-13; postface to the 24th fascicle of the earlier translation of the *Jñānaprasthāna,* 八犍度是體耳。別有六足可百萬言, T1543.887a21-22, etc. For further references see Willemen, Dessein and Cox 161.

[1801] For the general modern scholarly consensus on this chronology, see Willemen, Dessein and Cox, 172-174; for reasons for caution with regard to it when it comes to all individual passages and ideas contained in the texts, see 167. Chronologies based upon form and content tend to agree in their overall results, 175. This chronology remarkably agrees with the order ascribed to the texts in the tradition e.g. by Puguang, 171. For an example of the difficulties that attend definitive determination of relative chronological precedence between the *Saṃgītiparyāya* and the *Dharmaskandha,* see 172.

[1802] This text, a commentary on the *Saṃgīti-sūtra* of the *Dīrghâgama* (cf. *Saṃgīti-sutta,* DN 33) is most likely very early, both on grounds of its form, and also because even the apparently early *Prajñapti-śāstra* cites it.

Dharmaskandha (法蘊足論, T1537);[1803]

Prajñapti-śāstra (阿毘達磨施設足論, T1538);[1804]

which three texts are considered oldest of all; followed by a second group comprising

Dhātukāya (阿毘達磨界身足論 T1540);[1805]

Vijñānakāya (阿毘達磨識身足論, T1539);[1806]

See Ulrich Kragh, s.v. "Shishe lun" 施設論, DDB; Dan Lusthaus, s.v. "Apidamo jiyimen zulun" 阿毘達磨集異門足論, DDB; both accessed April 6, 2007. See also Willemen, Dessein and Cox 177-181; Frauwallner, *Studies in Abhidharma Literature* 14-15.

[1803] On the *Dharmaskandha,* see Willemen, Dessein and Cox 181-189; Frauwallner 15-21. The structure of this text is very close to the Pāli *Vibhaṇga*, as are other telltale features of its contents, Frauwallner 17-19, Willemen, Dessein and Cox 182; these similarities, combined with numerous differences in detail, argue for a common source of considerable antiquity (for Frauwallner, prior to Aśoka's missions), Frauwallner 20; nonetheless, the text (like *Saṃgītiparyāya*) seems to have been open to the incorporation of later ideas in numerous details, 21.

[1804] See also, on this text, Willemen, Dessein and Cox 189-197; Frauwallner, *Studies in Abhidharma Literature* omits consideration of this text because he did not have access to the extant Tibetan at the time of writing, 211 n. 4. This text must be later than at least the *Saṃgītiparyāya,* since it contains citations of that work; see Ulrich Kragh, s.v. "Shishe lun" 施設論, DDB, accessed April 6, 2007. On features in common with the other two earliest texts, see Willemen Dessein and Cox 194. Despite the lateness of the extant Chinese (translated only under the Song, and not by Xuanzang, uniquely among the canonical texts), there are reasons to suspect it might represent an earlier version of the text than the Tibetan, possibly dating back to the fourth century; Willemen, Dessein and Cox 192.

[1805] On the *Dhātukāya,* see Willemen, Dessein and Cox 206-212; Frauwallner, *Studies in Abhidharma Literature* 21-28. The relative chronology of the *Dhātukāya* and *Vijñānakāya* is said to be uncertain; it contains much overlap with the *Prakaraṇapāda,* and in the Chinese traditions, its authorship is ascribed to the same figure (Vasumitra); certain features suggest an early date; its method is typical of the earliest Abhidharma texts; it may have been subsumed into the *Prakaraṇapāda* as its fourth chapter; various other complications bedevil the question of its relations, in both content and chronology, with other texts; Willemen, Dessein and Cox, 206-208. The text is related to the *Dhātukathā* of the Pāli Abhidhamma; Frauwallner, *Studies in Abhidharma Literature* 25 (following la Vallée Poussin); for Frauwallner, this connection with a Pāli work argues for an early date, 27.

[1806] On the *Vijñānakāya,* See Willemen, Dessein and Cox 197-205; Frauwallner, *Studies in Abhidharma Literature* 28-31. The *Vijñānakāya* may be placed broadly in this second chronological group on the grounds that it is innovative with comparison to the *Saṃgītiparyāya* and *Dharmaskandha,* and cited (39 times) in the **Mahāvibhāṣā;* Willemen, Dessein and Cox, 197-198. Note that the *Vijñānakāya* is the first text to teach existence in all three time-periods, from which doctrine Sarvâstivāda derives its name; Willemen, Dessein and Cox 198-199.

Prakaraṇapāda (阿毘達磨品類足論, T1542; 眾事分阿毘曇論, T1541);[1807]

Jñānaprasthāna (阿毘達磨發智論 T1544, 阿毘曇八犍度論 T1543; below JñP);

the latter of which is the root text upon which the **Mahāvibhāṣā* is a commentary; followed by the *Vibhāṣā* itself.

Given that all of these texts appear to be earlier than the *Vibhāṣā,* it is of course of great interest to us to know accurately what they have to say about bodies in general, and the embodiments of the Buddha in particular. Any variance between their doctrines and that of the *Vibhāṣā* itself, and/or between the latter and that of the even later *Abhidharmakośa,* would of course give us clues as to the development of the idea of embodiment internal to Sarvâstivāda. Ideally, then, we would undertake a full study of the idea of embodiment as it appears in all of these texts.[1808] While such a comprehensive study is certainly beyond our present compass, it turns out that it is in fact possible to be quite comprehensive about doctrines of the Buddha's embodiments, at least, in these texts, because they seem to be almost entirely uninterested in this problem.

In what follows, therefore, I will keep one eye open for relevant passages in the earlier seven texts listed above, and selectively bring in evidence from those texts as seems appropriate. In particular, given that the *Vibhāṣā* is a commentary on the *Jñānaprasthāna,* I will endeavour to check in the case of each conception of embodiment we examine whether or not it is found in

[1807] On the *Prakaraṇapāda,* see Willemen, Dessein and Cox 212-221; Frauwallner, *Studies in Abhidharma Literature* 32-37; also Frauwallner 16, on its relationship to the *Dharmaskandha;* its fourth chapter is a reworking of the latter text, 25-26.

[1808] In like manner as, ideally, one would like to see a full study of notions of embodiment through the Prajñāpāramitā literature over time, as represented in the latter case by the rich layered sequence of historical Chinese translations; as we observed in Ch. 4.1.

the *Jñānaprasthāna* itself in addition to the *Vibhāṣā,* in which case there will obviously be stronger grounds for considering the idea in question old.

A second arm to the methodology pursued in this portion of my research has to do with the relative chronology of the Chinese translations, rather than the likely relative chronology of the Indic originals of the texts themselves. All but one of the seven foundational texts listed above, in addition to the **Mahāvibhāṣā* itself, were translated by the indefatigable, prodigious Xuanzang; the sole exception is the *Prajñapti-śāstra,* of which our only Chinese translation dates to the Song.[1809] However, Xuanzang is yet extremely late for our purposes, and I have already observed above that there are reasons to worry that his translations of the texts may represent versions that had grown further after the period that most concerns us here.

In the case of three texts in this corpus, however, we are fortunate to have other, earlier translations (in such cases, the Xuanzang translation is always given first in the above list). First, the *Jñānaprasthāna*, to which the *Vibhāṣā* is a commentary, was translated in 383 by Saṃghadeva and Zhu Fonian under the title of **Aṣṭaskandhaśāstra* (阿毘曇八犍度論, T1543). In addition, we have translation of the *Prakaraṇapāda* from 435-443 by Gunabhadra and Bodhiyaśas (眾事分阿毘曇論, T1541).[1810]

The situation when we consider "the" *Vibhāṣā* is more complex. Three texts by the title of *[*Mahā-*]*vibhāṣā* are extant, all in the Chinese canon. However, Willemen, Dessein and Cox treat these as plural texts in a *vibhāṣā* genre, rather than as parallel translations of the same text,

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[1809] T1538; trans. *Dharmarakṣa/*Dharmapāla 法護.

[1810] Willemen, Dessein and Cox 212.

while at the same time treating at least two of the texts as very closely related, if not as distinct versions[1811] of the same text.[1812]

The earliest of these texts ("earliest" in the Chinese record, without prejudice as to the relative dates of the underlying Indic texts), the **Vibhāṣāśāstra* (鞞婆沙論, T1547), was translated in 383 by *Saṃghabhūti/Saṃghabhadra (僧伽跋澄, below "Saṃghabhūti" for convenience) and a team of collaborators, and is much smaller than the other two, at only fourteen fascicles.[1813] This text is very different in structure from the other two *Vibhāṣā,* and comments only on selected portions of the root text JñP.[1814]

The second text to appear in the Chinese record, the **Abhidharmavibhāṣāśāstra* (阿毘曇毘婆沙論, T1546) was translated in 437-439 by Buddhavarman 浮陀跋摩, Daotai 道泰 et al. (I will refer to this text below as "Buddhavarman" for convenience). The translation was originally a hundred fascicles, but it was lost in political turmoil almost immediately upon completion in

1811 In what follows, for the sake of simplicity, I will nonetheless refer to the three texts as "versions" and "translations" as if they are roughly parallel variants of the same text, taking the complications introduced here as read.

1812 See their section on "The *Vibhāṣā* Compendia", 229-239. Though all the extant *Vibhāṣā* are commentaries on the *Jñānaprasthāna,* there is further evidence that more such texts existed and were lost, and that others in the genre were based upon other texts; 230-231. In discussing the correspondences and divergences between T1545, T1546, and Sanskrit fragments in the Pelliot collection, however, the authors speak of "both Chinese translations", 233, 233-234; "three distinct recensions [including the Sanskrit] of *a vibhāṣā*" etc.

1813 Willemen, Dessein and Cox 232.

1814 Viz. those sections that Willemen, Dessein and Cox call the "matrix sections" on "16 categories of factors" and "41 categories of factors in 10 topical divisions"; Willemen, Dessein and Cox 235. For further details of these sections in JñP, see Willemen, Dessein and Cox 228-229. Kawamura Kōshō holds that this focus is the result of "an intention to concentrate on these sections; therefore, the text as extant should not, necessarily, be seen as a remnant of a once complete commentary;" Willemen, Dessein and Cox 236. Internal evidence suggests that this version of the text (i.e. the text itself, not the Chinese translation) may be earlier than either of the other extant *Vibhāṣā*; 236.

439, and only partially restored; our extant text is thus a partial text in sixty fascicles, covering only the first three of eight chapters of JñP.[1815]

In cases where we consider evidence from these three texts, and most especially, obviously, for the *Vibhāṣā* and *Jñānaprasthāna* themselves, given that they are at the focus of this study, it will be important to check that the ideas we study are present in the earlier translations also. Even where they are, we will arguably at best have limited grounds for confidence that they date back as far as the supposed era in which the texts were first redacted; but in hypothetical cases where an idea is missing from an earlier version but found in Xuanzang, we will obviously have reason to fear that it is in fact of later origin than the supposed date of the text as a whole.[1816]

4.4.2 That the *rūpakāya* is not really a body of the Buddha in *Vibh*[1817]

As I have already noted above, it is commonly said that the Sarvâstivāda, as represented by the **Mahāvibhāṣā* (*Vibh*) ascribes two bodies to the Buddha, a *rūpakāya* and a *dharmakāya*.[1818] The

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[1815] Willemen, Dessein and Cox, 232-233.

[1816] Of course, it will also be important to bear in mind that in each of the earlier *Vibhāṣās,* we seem to only have part of the text. *Saṃghabhūti is only 14 *juan,* and even Saṃghavarman/Daotai comprises, in the extant version, 60 fascicles (of an original 100), against Xuanzang's 200 *juan*. Some parts of the text may thus be missing from *Saṃghabhūti because it is presumably only a partial translation, and from Saṃghavarman because the portion of the text that might have contained them is lost.

[1817] The rudiments of some of the arguments in the following analysis were first developed in the course of my article reviewing Guang Xing's *Concept of the Buddha* in NZJAS.

[1818] Takeuchi Shōkō inexplicably proposes that the texts also use the term *shishen* 實身 for this same body, referring both to Āgama and "schools" (部派) sources. However, the term *shishen,* which is in any case rather rare in the Chinese canon, is never used, that I could discover, in opposition to *fashen* 法身 as part of a "two-body" theory as Takeuchi claims. Since Takeuchi does not support his claims with sources, it is of course impossible to know what led him to make them. See "Buddakan", 160. La Vallée Poussin, for his part, proposes specifically in the Sarvâstivāda context that a synonym of *rūpakāya* is *vipākakāya,* but he, too, does not provide sources for this assertion. Within the corpus of Sarvâstivāda texts surveyed here, the only place I can find the term *baoshen* = **vipākakāya* applied to the Buddha (strictly to the *bodhisattva* Śākyamuni) is in one version of the passage considering the question of why the Buddha was not born into a rarefied heaven rather than among men in the *kāmadhātu,* for which see above, p. 857. The term is otherwise rare, if not non-existent, in this corpus, and there are scarcely grounds for putting it forward as a regular synonym of "body of birth".

first problem with this understanding is that the *rūpakāya* is clearly not a special body of the Buddha in *Vibh,* and indeed, the Buddha could legitimately be said to "have" a *rūpakāya* only insofar as he is *not* a Buddha, that is, insofar as he is an ordinary sentient being (which, apparently, means that it is not legitimate to say this to any great degree at all!).

First, as I noted above, there is only one occasion, in the entire vast bulk of *Vibh,* where a *seshen* 色身 is predicated of the Buddha. On the other hand, the text does use the term relatively frequently.[1819] In places, the context makes it clear that it is the very general, ordinary body of incarnation in the *kāmadhātu,* in the context of technical discussions about the differences between rebirth in these various realms.[1820] Sometimes it is even clear that *rūpakāya* is understood specifically as the unsatisfactory body of suffering, as for example when it is discussed in terms of the five *upādānaskandha* (which a Buddha would not have).[1821] It is clear that *seshen* are a general (possible) property of any old sentient being in a different sense in a

[1819] 38 times, according to a CBETA CD-Rom search.

[1820] This body features as the "support" (所依, *āśraya*) of the fourth *dhyāna,* T1545.417c02; contrasted with other *dhyānas* which do not need it as support, but are supported by the *manodhātu* alone, T1545.374b03-04; all beings in realms of *rūpakāya* must have either male or female organs, a fact which is glossed by the presence of *upādānarūpaskandha*, T1545.745c01-02; a theory is reported that longevity in the *kāmadhātu* is dependent upon the *rūpakāya,* defined as *saṃtāna* 相續 , and for so long as a being born into the *kāmadhātu* does not enter into *asamjñāsamāpatti, nirodhasamāpatti* etc., the destruction of the body will bring about the premature end of their lifespan, T1545.771b09-10; *avijñapti* is dependent upon a body of *rūpa,* and so in the cases of beings incarnated in *arūpya* bodies, there is no *avijñapti,* T1545.860c20-21.

[1821] T1545.37b15-17. So, too, the text discusses the contemplation of impermanence in the *rūpakāya*, T1545.136c04-05; the "body of form", as a general rubric for the body of four elements, is associated with the body of the five sense organs, and articulated in contrast to *citta-* and *caitāsikadharmāḥ,* i.e. with reference to a part of the overall schema of *saṃskāradharmāḥ,* T1545.167c23-24 ff.; it is the rubric under which the text mentions contemplation of the impure, T1545.545a24 (as is the case in the sole instance where the term is applied to a body of the Buddha below); in a discussion of the four *smṛtyupasthāna,* it is explained that only the mindfulness of the body, and not of *vedanā, citta* and *dharma* (see above §2.1.3), are said to be based upon the body in reference to the *rūpakāya,* which it takes as its object, T1545.938c07-15; in a discussion of the error of taking the body for a self (*satkāyadṛṣṭi*), it is the *rūpakāya* that would be mistakenly taken for the self, T1545.1001a11, b05; in Vasumitra's explanation of why *tīrthakas* think that *jīvaka* is distinct from the body, *rūpakāya* is the term used in explaining that they misapprehend the body as changing where they think mind and mental concomitants do not, and that the body is multipartite where they think mind and mental concomitants are unitary, T1545.1003a17-28.

set of passages that posit the possibility of sentient beings either having (a) bodies of form or (b) formless bodies (色無色身), depending upon the level of the cosmological hierarchy at which they are reborn.[1822] In one passage, it is even clear that *seshen* are predicated, rather, of *tiannü* 天女 ("*āpsaras*"), and is specifically said to be a result of the magic they can work.[1823]

Thus, a systematic survey of the way *Vibh* uses the term *rūpakāya* suggests that to the extent that such a body might indeed be predicated of a Buddha, there is nothing about it that makes it proper to him; rather, it is the body he shares with ordinary worldlings, and as such, it is surely incidental or even embarrassing to his status as the Buddha, and if anything, the text downplays it in speaking of him. In this sense, it is already a grave error to claim that a *rūpakāya* is an important part of the text's doctrine of Buddha bodies. In fact, attention to the way the term really works in the text shows clearly that it is not deployed primarily in the attempt to conceptualise the Buddha's embodiment at all, but rather, that it is most consistently used as part of the attempt to conceptualise the different consequences of rebirth at different levels of the cosmological schema, where some beings have bodies comprised primarily of *rūpaskandha,* and some beings do not. It also shows that, far from being a specific, let alone special, embodiment *of the Buddha,* as the usual understanding would lead us to believe, *rūpakāya* is very frequently spoken of explicitly as associated with suffering and ignorance in

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[1822] Details of the hierarchy of rebirth destinies in which this distinction has meaning are given at T1545.707a14-b24. The specific contrast between these different possibilities of embodiment features, e.g. as part of a discussion of the role of the "six elements" (consciousness, earth, water, fire, wind and space) in fostering the production and growth of these bodies, T1545.387b22-28. The same possibilities of embodiment, depending upon rebirth, are also contemplated at T1545.685c27-28. So, too, they feature, contrasted in the same sense, at T1545.879b23-26.

[1823] This passage casts light on possible *Vibhāṣā* antecedents or parallels to the notion of the *nirmāṇakāya*: 白尊者言。我四天女。能於四處變化自在。一者隨欲化 (**nir/mā*?) 作種種上妙色身諸相愛者。我等皆能歡娛承事。二者隨欲化作種種上妙衣服。三者隨欲化作種種妙莊嚴具。四者隨欲化作種種上妙花香飲食珍翫諸欲樂具, T1545.207a01-06.

various senses, and further is far more generally associated with kinds of sentient being other than the Buddha. Clearly, *rūpakāya* is in no coherent sense a "body of the Buddha" in *Vibh.*

As I already mentioned, the compound *seshen* 色身 (**rūpakāya*) occurs only once in a context where it clearly does indicate a body being predicated of the Buddha.[1824] The context here is very specific: a discussion of whether or not it is possible to engage in a contemplation of impurity (不淨觀, **aśubhabhāvaṇā*[1825]) taking the *rūpa*[-*skandha*] of the Buddha as the contemplative object.[1826]

Even if the text does apparently speak of "the *rūpakāya* of the Buddha", we should not read this as a very firm way of putting things. First, in a parallel passage that presents the same controversy, the term *rūpakāya* does not appear at all, suggesting that the question can as well be understood in terms merely of a generic "body of the Buddha".[1827] Further, even in the version of the text that does apparently speak of *rūpakāya*, the passage immediately goes on to speak of both "the visible form (*rūpa*) of the Buddha" (佛色) and "the body of the Buddha" (佛身) *separately*, in a manner that makes it clear that the association between the two members of the compound *seshen* is here, at best, loose.

[1824] Astonishingly, given that this is the only passage in which the *Vibhāṣā* comes close to speaking of a *rūpakāya of the Buddha* in any sense at all, Guang Xing does not study it closely in his chapter claiming that *Vibh* teaches a *rūpakāya* of the Buddha as part of its two-body theory (he refers to it in passing only once, so far as I could determine; *Concept of the Buddha* 35).

[1825] Cf. Pāli *paṭikkūlamanasikāra,* for which see §2.1.3d above.

[1826] T1545.207b02 ff.

[1827] See T1545.439a15-26, where the question is presented thus: 緣佛身色頗有能起不淨觀不.

With that proviso in mind, let us examine the passage. It is worth giving in its entirety for its intrinsic interest to the problem of the status of the Buddha's body in the text as a whole:

> "Question: Is it possible to engage in contemplation of impurity taking the Buddha's body of physical form (佛色身, **buddhasya rūpakāya*)[1828] as the meditative object?
>
> "[Answer:] Some hold that this is impossible, because the Buddha's physical form (**buddha-rūpa,* 佛色) is extremely subtle, most exceeding bright and clean, like pure light, and it is therefore impossible to be disgusted by it. Other masters, however, hold that it is possible for a Buddha to engage in contemplation of impurity taking himself as a meditative object, but that it is not possible for other people [to engage in such a contemplation with him as the object]. Others again hold that there are two kinds of contemplation of impurity: (1) of the conditioned nature (**pratītyasamutpannatva*?) of physical form; and (2) of physical form as evil and ill-omened. [It is held that the contemplation of impurity] of the conditioned nature can take the Buddha as the meditative object, but that [the contemplation of impurity as] evil and ill-omened cannot take the Buddha as the meditative object. Finally, there are those who hold that there are [a different] two kinds of contemplation of impurity: (1) at the level[1829] of universal characteristics (*sāmānyalakṣaṇa*); and (2) at the level of particularity (*svalakṣaṇa*). [It is held that contemplation of impurity at] the level of universal characteristics can take the Buddha's body (佛身, **buddhakāya*) as the meditative object, while [the contemplation of impurity at] the level of particularity cannot take the Buddha (佛) as the meditative object."[1830]

This passage contains much of interest. The first point for our purposes here, as I mentioned above, is to note the loose way in which the passage refers back to the topic of the "Buddha's

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[1828] The word *seshen = rūpakāya* does not occur in the earlier Saṃghabhūti version of this passage; see n. 1829.

[1829] This is a clumsy translation of *jing,* usually for Sanskrit *viṣaya*. This term also refers to a kind of cognitive "object", but I wanted to distinguish somehow in my translation here between this *jing* and *yuan* , usually for Sanskrit *ālambana*, which I have translated "meditative object". The distinction, I take it, is that the *yuan=ālambana* is the general object (or "topic", if you like) that serves as the occasion for the contemplation as a whole, but the *jing=viṣaya* is the particular, local aspect of that object with which cognitive engagement is achieved moment-to-moment through the course of the contemplation.

[1830] 問有緣佛色身起不淨觀不。有作是說。無有能者。佛色微妙最極鮮潔如淨光明不可厭故。有餘師說。佛能自緣起不淨觀。餘無能者。或有說者。不淨觀有二種。一色緣起。二色過患。色緣起者。能緣佛身。色過患者。不能緣佛。復有說者。不淨觀有二種。一共相境。二自相境。共相境者能緣佛身。自相境者不能緣佛, T1545.207b02-10. This passage is already contained in the Saṃghabhūti version of the text, T1547.504c27-505a11; also in Buddavarman/Daotai, T1546.340b28-c06. However, there are some key differences between these earlier presentations and the version we find in Xuanzang. Most notable for our present purposes, of course, is the fact that they do not contain the term *rūpakāya* (indeed, as we shall see below, this term never appears in Saṃghabhūti). Saṃghabhūti also does not present the opinion that the Buddha can contemplate meditation with his own body as object, but not others; others among the opinions cited also differ.

body of material form" as "the Buddha's material form", "the Buddha's body", or just "the Buddha", which indicates clearly that *foseshen* here does not refer to any formalised notion of a *rūpakāya* proper or particular to the Buddha. Indeed, the association between the members of this compound (or clause) seems so loose that we might well translate the opening question, "Is it possible . . . taking the body *or* material form of the Buddha (佛色身) as the meditative object?" It is also noteworthy, in this connection, that the term *rūpakāya* does not appear in the version of the same passage that appears in the earlier translation by Saṃghabhūti.[1831]

Within the frame of this observation about the low level of formalisation of the notion of "the Buddha's material [or] body" in this passage, the next point of note is that the Buddha's body, here, insofar as it is specifically characterised, is *not* spoken of in terms that would lead us to understand it as shared with other beings, even though, as we have seen above, the most typical use of the term *seshen* in this text is to refer to bodies possessed by a range of beings. Unsurprisingly, given that this is the Buddha we are talking about, *all* the authorities cited in the summary of this controversy believe that there is something special about the body of the Buddha, and that it is not simply impure in the way that other physical bodies are impure.[1832] This also suggests that despite the overlap of nomenclature in the single phrase *fo seshen* 佛色身, the passage is *not* proposing that the Buddha "has" a *rūpakāya* in the terms that concept is usually understood elsewhere in the text, and thus, once more, that even this passage should not lead us to capitulate to the traditional erroneous view that the text proposes a *rūpakāya* as part of a twofold model of the Buddha's embodiment.

[1831] See the preceding fn. 1830.

[1832] See below, p. 864, however, for the statement that the physical body of the Buddha is indeed impure, and therefore cannot be the object of the ritual act of taking refuge.

In conclusion, then, it seems clear that *rūpakāya* is not a special body of the Buddha in this text. We now turn, therefore, to the task of determining what the text *does* say about his embodiments.

4.4.3 The Buddha's physical body simply called "the body" or "the Buddha's body"

In passages that clearly do refer to the body of the Buddha, but not especially to the *dharmakāya,* it much more usual, in fact, for *Vibh* just to speak of *shen* 身, without calling it any particular *kind* of body at all, or to call it merely "the body of the Buddha" (佛身).

For example, the text clearly recognises the body of marks of the *mahāpuruṣa*[1833] as a dimension of the overall range of the Buddha's embodiments, but in speaking of this possibility, it *never* uses the term *rūpakaya.*[1834] Nor does it use the special term that we will see below *is* in fact used to speak of the Buddha's visible worldly body (*shengshen* 生身). It consistently speaks, rather, of simply *shen* "the body" of *foshen* "the Buddha's body";[1835] in one passage alone, it also speaks of

[1833] As with other texts by this stage of doctrinal history, it regularly groups the eighty minor marks, the golden complexion, and the halo of light with the thirty-two marks of the original Pāli passages.

[1834] *Pace* Guang, *Concept of the Buddha,* Ch. 2, where one of the author's main contentions is precisely that in the supposed Sarvâstivāda two-body theory, *rūpakāya* is primarily the body of marks.

[1835] Of particular importance are two passages. First, much of *juan* 177 is occupied with discussing the marks as part of a larger discussion of *karma* of body, speech and mind. (This entire discussion is notably missing from earlier versions of the text.) The term *foshen* 佛身 features in this discussion thirteen times, and once 如來身; by contrast, no technical term for a special Buddha body is ever used. Second, in a passage discussing the means by which it was possible for the Tathāgata to prophesy that Maitreya will become a Buddha in future, the text lays down the twofold stipulation that "the bodies of all Buddhas must have the unsurpassed thirty-two marks and the unsurpassed **āryadharma*(*s*), viz. *anuttarasaṃyaksaṃbodhi"* 一切佛身必有無上三十二相及無上聖法。謂正等菩提, T1545.894c13-14; an important definition to which we will return below. In this case, also, no special term is used for the body of marks. See also, for further passages discussing the marks under the general rubric of "body" or "the Buddha's body", T1545.159c14-16; 361b24-25; 428c02-05; 590b02-04; 730a08-10.

"the great body";[1836] and, in the narrative of Māra showing the body of a Buddha to Upagupta, it strongly associates the body of marks with the "body of birth" (see immediately below), in opposition to the *dharmakāya*.[1837] This is the case also when the text speaks of the light emanated by the Buddha's body alone.[1838]

"Body" alone, or interchangeably "body of the Buddha", are the terms used when the text discusses the reason that it is an *anantarya* sin[1839] to draw blood from the body of the Buddha.[1840]

[1836] *Dashen* 大身, 159c13-19, repeated almost verbatim 428c01-05. This passage is already found in the Saṃghabhūti version of the text, which also speaks of a "great body", as does Buddhavarman; T1547.496b13-21, T1546.322a04-08. While I do not know of any concept of **mahākāya, *mahāśarīra, *mahâtmabhāva* etc. to which this Ch. might correspond, it is possible, of course, that the 大 may somehow echo the notion of the *mahāpuruṣa*. Cf. the term *dazhangfushen* 大丈夫身 = **mahāpuruṣakāya,* found a number of times in the text at T1545.157a08-09, 158b22-23, 160a15-16, always in the context of the formula "the body of a human, a *mahāpuruṣa* in Jambudvīpa, in the *kāmadhātu"* 欲界人贍部洲大丈夫身, which is said to be the only "basis" (*āśraya* 依) upon which it is possible to become a Buddha (or to attain [his] great compassion). This latter term, however, never appears in explicit connection with the doctrine of marks. It is perhaps significant that the one place where the term *dashen* is used is explaining the reason that the Buddha's compassion (the last of the eighteen *āveṇikadharmāḥ,* for which see below, §7.3.8) is called *great* compassion (*mahākaruṇā*); the unusual diction might thus be a way of bringing out more clearly the analogy between the "body of the *great* man" and the so-called "*great* compassion" which is there said to be so-called because it is based upon that body.

Note that the passage at T1545.216a23-25, in particular, which mentions only 丈夫身 (without *da*) clearly does not refer to a Buddha at all, but rather tells the story of a she-elephant 牝象 who, because of the merit of having carried the Buddha in a former life, attains to birth in a male body 丈夫身 (**puruṣakāya*) and then to Arhatship. Similarly, the use of 丈夫身, T1545.889c01-03, without *da,* seems merely to refer to birth in a male body, among the list of benefits that accrue to *bodhisattva* practice.

[1837] Māra transforms himself into the image of the Buddha's last earthly body for the benefit of Upagupta, who was born too late to see him in the flesh. Here, the text merely says that Māra entered the forest and "transformed his body into the image of a Tathāgata" 化身作如來像, which had the marks; 698a13-15. Immediately previously, however, Upagupta has phrased his dilemma by saying "I have already seen the *dharmakāya* of the Buddha; what I have not seen is the Buddha's body of birth" 如來法身吾今已見。所未見者。謂佛生身, T1545.698a09-10. For this tradition about Upagupta and Māra, see Strong, *The Legend and Cult of Upagupta* 104-117; note that in the Skt. *Divyâvadāna* version of the same story, the term used is rather *rūpakāya,* for which see n. 2220.

[1838] T1545.65c11.

[1839] I.e. one of the five worst sins, which result in being plummeted immediately to Avīci hell.

[1840] T1545.177b04-13; numerous times, "body" interchangeably with "body of the Buddha",506a06-b06. Other passages that use the term "body of the Buddha" in this connection may be found at 588a04-10; 600a25-b17; 601c29-602b05, etc.

The text also speaks simply of "the body of the Buddha" when it discusses exactly what happened during a miracle where the Buddha miraculously vanished, and lists various theories about the whereabouts or transformation of his body at the time.[1841] The text uses the same term when contrasting his physical strength with the "power of his thought" (意力), where under the latter head it clearly discusses items (such as the eighteen *āveṇikadharmas*) associated with the *dharmakāya*.[1842] "Body of the Buddha" (佛身形) is also the term used when the text discusses the fact that the Buddha became visibly physically weak near the time of his death (*parinirvāṇa*).[1843]

In the majority of examples, as we see above, the generic, unmodified terms "body" or "body of the Buddha" refer to what we would usually understand as the visible, physical body of the Buddha, usually during his last earthly incarnation or some related existence. However, the same term also sometimes refers clearly to what we will see below the *Vibh* will also call, when it specifies, the *dharmakāya,* as when it discusses "Buddha" in the context of a discussion of each of the three gems as objects of insight into the four noble truths, and says, "'Buddha' here refers to the *aśaikṣadharmas* in the body of the Buddha (佛身). Taintless faith (without outflows, *anāsrava*) that takes that as its object (緣) is called 'realisation and purification by means

[1841] T1545.66a08-15. Such contexts would obviously be associated with *nairmāṇikakāya* in later texts that posited such a body, and indeed, here we already find *hua shen* 化身 but as a verb-object clause; see below §4.4.10 for further discussion. The same passage varies considerably in Buddhavarman, and is markedly simpler. It does not cite the scripture describing Brahmā's attempts to hide before the Buddha has his turn, and it does not speculate on the exact means by which the Buddha was able to accomplish his feat at all. On the other hand, it contains a discussion on who is capable of hiding themselves from whom: the Buddha from everyone, a *pratyekabuddha* from all but the Buddha, Maudgalyāyana from all but the Buddha, a *pratyekabuddha,* and Śāriputra, etc. T1546.54a15-24.

[1842] T1545.156c16.

[1843] T1545.680a13-14.

of/with regard to *buddha.*'"[1844] It seems likely that the *dharmakāya* is meant by the same term when the text, in discussing the difference between ordinary compassion and the "great compassion" (*mahākaruṇā*) of the Buddha, says that the former is based upon the body of the (ordinary) sentient being, whereas the latter is based upon the "body of the Buddha".[1845]

Thus, it is clear from these passages that even where the text discusses the embodiment of the Buddha from the perspective of what makes it special, there is not necessarily *any* special term applied to it. Nonetheless, it is also the case that the text does indeed apply special terms to the discussion of the special bodies of the Buddha.

[1844] 此中佛者。謂佛身中諸無學法 etc., T1545.533b20-26. This passage is somewhat complex, but the basic idea is that if one first gains insight e.g. into the first noble truth (of suffering), this means one first gains realisation and purification with regard to *dharma*; if one first gains insight in the fourth noble truth (of the path), one first gains realisation and purification with regard to all three of the gems; and so on. In this context, the text draws distinctions between the three gems in terms of their embodiment: (1) the *aśaikṣadharmāḥ* in the body of the Buddha is what is referred to by the term *buddha*, as we have already seen above; (s) the term *dharma* refers to "the *śaikṣa* and *aśaikṣa dharmas,* i.e. the three *anāsravêndriya* etc." (三無漏根等學無學法) in the body of the *pratyekabuddha;* or alternatively, *dharma* also refers to the *śaikṣa dharma*s in the body of the *bodhisattva,* viz. two *anāsravêndriya* etc.; and a taintless faith that takes them as its object and [achieves insight into] the first three noble truths of suffering, its origination, and its extinction is called "realisation and purification with regard to *dharma*"; (3) the term *saṃgha* refers to the *śaikṣa* and *aśaikṣa dharmas* in the body of the *śrāvaka*, and a taintless faith that takes them as its object is called '"realisation and purification with regard to *saṃgha*", etc. Note the idea that not just the Buddha, but the adepts of all three vehicles can be characterised by their different modes of embodiment, and the further somewhat odd application of this notion to the rubric of the three gems, which creates interesting correlations between modes of embodiment and even the *saṃgha.* Note also the fact that the passage appeals to the model of the three vehicles *per se,* with the *śrāvakas* clearly at the bottom of the heap; one respect among several in which this text seems to be tending towards some Mahāyāna ideas, and not to be simply and unproblematically "Mainstream".

[1845] T1545.160b14-15. This context is present in Buddhavarman, but in a simpler form, and this particular sentence is notably absent from it; see below n. 2108.

Compare the slightly different presentation of the same basic idea at 428a20-22, "[Ordinary] compassion is perfected in the body of the *śrāvaka,* the *pratyekabuddha,* and the Buddha; great compassion is only perfected in the body of the Buddha." The latter passage is already present in Buddhavarman, T1546.322a04-08, where, however, the text speaks of the "great body" (*dashen, *mahākāya*) rather than the "body of the Buddha"; see above n. 1836. Immediately before the latter passage, it is also stated that the reason the Buddha's compassion is called "great" (*mahā-*) is that "all the limitless merits in the Buddha's body are great", 以佛身中一切功德皆是大, 428a06-07.

One of those special terms has not been adequately noted by prior scholarship. We now turn to examining that term – the "body of birth" – which, as we shall see, is the body that *is* discussed in opposition to the *dharmakāya* in the text.

4.4.4 The Buddha's "body of birth"/"body born of father and mother" in *Vibh*

Where *Vibh* does specify more exactly the *kind* of body it means in reference to the Buddha, when not speaking of the *dharmakāya*, it is far more common for it rather to speak of a *shengshen* 生身, "body of birth" (**sāṃbhavikakāya*) .[1846]

One very curious passage explains the reasons that the Buddha's funeral pyre (referred to rather graphically as "the fire to burn the Tathāgata's body", 焚如來身火) was extinguished (miraculously, out of thin air, in accordance with the unspoken wish of Mahākāśyapa) by "fragrant milk". Typically, multiple reasons are given, but one of these is that the Buddha's "body of birth" was nourished on milk, and thus (by a process of analogy?) it is appropriate that his relics (*śarīra/-āṇi,* 設利羅), also, be bathed with milk.[1847]

[1846] T1545.392a13-15; 229a15-b02; 601c29-602a06, 620c12-18, 620c26-28; 佛生身 698a08-12, 871b29-c20, 391c21-392a11; etc. La Vallée Poussin reconstructs **janmakāya,* e.g. "Appendice" 768 , but it seems more accurate, on the basis of the Pāli antecedent for the "body born of father and mother" (see below), where the verbal noun used is *saṃbhava,* to reconstruct accordingly. For support for my reconstruction, see e.g. the *Mahāvastu* (Sanskrit) version of the DN 2 pericope (to which we turn immediately below), *mātapitṛsaṃbhavo śramaṇakāyo odanakumbhāṣopacayo* etc., Senart II, 269, 277-278. The use of the term "body of birth" or the more specific "body born of father and mother" is noted by a number of scholars (who are thus at least more accurate to the source materials than e.g. Guang Xing), though most misleadingly present it as if it is interchangeable with *rūpakāya.* Thus, see Takeuchi, "Buddakan" 160 (Takeuchi inexplicably proposes that *shishen* 實身 is a synonym of the term; see n. 1818 below); Demiéville 177 (who however merely translates source passages, and does not proceed to generalise as to what kind of theory he sees in these texts); la Vallée Poussin, "Appendice" 768 (la Vallée Poussin proposes that a synonym is *vipākakāya,* an assertion for which I see no grounds; see n. 1818 below).

[1847] T1545.958c11-26.

This passage is of interest, of course, because of the link by analogy it establishes between the treatment and status of the Buddha's last earthly body in life and the relics,[1848] an analogy we have also seen above is implicit in passages in Lokakṣema's translation of *Aṣṭa.* It is also unusual, however, in the context of *Vibh* itself, in that it speaks of the "body of birth" in relation to relics. In almost all of the other passages where we find this term used, it is clear that the contrast between the Buddha's various embodiments is understood in terms of the contrast between the *dharmakāya* and the **sāṃbhavikakāya; dharmakāya* is mentioned explicitly in most contexts where the term **sāṃbhavikakāya* is at play.

Thus, it is stipulated that the Buddha can only receive offerings of goods from others, because "the body of birth must depend upon clothing, food etc." (in contrast, it is impossible for the Buddha to receive an offering of *dharma* from others, because his *dharmakāya* is already perfect).[1849] The text similarly stipulates that it is the Buddha's "body of birth" that is under discussion when it states that the Buddha's "bodily strength" (身力) reaches its fullness at twenty-five years of age, remains the same until fifty, but thereafter begins to decline; here, too,

[1848] Other than this one passage, it is in fact notable, in contrast to *Aṣṭa* and other Praj. literature, that *Vibh* is almost entirely uninterested in relics. They are only mentioned by name in one other passage, where one reason mooted for the Buddha's entry into various levels of *samādhi* immediately before his *parinirvāṇa* is that he wanted to cultivate(?) for one last time the *śarīra/-āṇi* he was to leave behind, 有說。爲欲重修所留設利羅故, T1545.956b04-05. See also, however, the passage noted by la Vallée Poussin, "Appendice" 769, which says, in answer to the question of why the *bodhisattva* (Śākyamuni) did not choose birth by metamorphosis if it is superior, 627b06-08, that he chose birth from the womb in order to leave behind a body (遺身, **śarīra*?), that sentient beings might win immeasurable merit by the worship of "elements of the corpse (Skt. probably *śarīradhātu,* 'relics', for which see the parallel noted by la Vallée Poussin at AK 3.9, VP II, 30), as innumerable as mustard seeds" (遺身界如芥子許), 627c09-16. This latter passage is already found in the earliest version of *Vibh* trans. by Saṃghabhūti, T1547.522c17-18, 523a13-20.

[1849] T1545.154b05-08. The overall discussion on givers and recipients of offerings here is indeed present in Buddhavarman/Daotai, T1546.117c04-27; which makes the absence of this sentence all the more significant.

the contrast is with the *dharmakāya,* which "never deteriorates or wanes" (無衰退).[1850]

Similarly, in two passages when the text discusses the terrible punishment in hell that accrues to the sin of breaking the *saṃgha,* it explains the severity of the sin by saying that to break the *saṃgha* is to harm the Buddha's *dharmakāya,* and contrasts this with "a malicious attack that draws blood from the Buddha's body"; here, too, in referring to the physical body of the Buddha, the text speaks of the "body of birth" interchangeably with an unmodified "Buddha's body".[1851] The "body of birth" is also the term used for the physical body in the context of a discussion of which sense-organ is superior for what reason: one opinion is cited that the eye is best at guiding the body of birth, whereas the ear is best at "guiding" the *dharmakāya*;[1852] an opposing opinion is also cited, however, holding that eye and ear both can guide both bodies.[1853] Again, in commenting on the tradition related in MPNS that the Buddha exhibited his physical body to the assembled monks just before he entered *parinirvāṇa*,[1854] the text makes a true commentator's distinction between virtually synonymous verbs "see" (*avalokayata* 觀)and "behold" (察 *vyavalokayata*), and proposes, among other interpretations, that the former is said

[1850] T1545.156b05-12. This notion is already found in Buddhavarman/Daotai; T1546.119c23-24; see below n. 2092. Note that the strength at issue here is prodigious; see below, under the discussion of the more specific term "body born of father and mother", p. 866.

[1851] T1545.601c29-602a03, 620c09-18. Cf. AKBh to 4.32, VP III, 78-79. These passages are of interest also for aspects of the way they speak about the *dharmakāya,* and we will revisit them in that connection below.

[1852] Note that this statement seems to imply that the *dharmakāya* is being understood in terms of the teaching. This passage is already found in Saṃghabhūti, where the terms suggest rather that the ear acts as a condition that fosters the growth of the *dharmakāya*; it is also found in Buddhavarman/Daotai; see below n. 2066.

[1853] T1545.731a11-21.

[1854] Cited in the frontispiece of this dissertation; see n. **3** above. Note that this means that the version of MPNS known to at least some of the Vaibhāṣikas included this passage, which is absent from the Pāli.

with regard to the body of birth, where the latter is said of the *dharmakāya* (應觀我者。謂於生身。應察我者。謂於法身).[1855]

In one very odd passage that seems almost designed to demonstrate the apparent absurdities pious scholasticism sometimes leads to, the "body of birth" is compared to the *dharmakāya* in the context of a discussion of the details of rebirth in various heavens. The text says that in the *rūpadhātu,* beings are clothed at the very moment of birth, "because modesty is greater in the *rūpadhātu*" (色界中慚愧增故), and then explains further (and, to my mind, somewhat impenetrably), "Modesty is the garb of the *dharmakāya*. Just as the *dharmakāya* is clad in this most excellent of robes, so, too, the body of birth [is clad]." The text then goes on further to explain that the majority of creatures in the *kāmadhātu,* by contrast, are born naked, because "most [beings in] the *kāmadhātu* are shameless" (欲界中多無慚愧).[1856]

The term "body of birth" is also consistently the term used (interchangeably with the simple term "the body of the Buddha") in discussing the vexed issue of the purity or impurity of the Buddha's body (i.e. whether or not it has "outflows", *āsrava*), which recurs in several passages.

[1855] T1545.957c25-958a14.

[1856] T1545.362b14-c14. In both of the earlier *Vibh* translations the term here is also "body of birth", T1546.267c27, T1547.518b26-27. The text goes on to say that the exceptions to this rule in the *kāmadhātu* are, according to one theory, *bodhisattvas* and the nun Śuklā (白淨苾芻尼, later in the same para. 白淨尼, 白淨比丘尼 in Saṃghavarman/Daotai, T1546.267c29), who have a kind of "permanent, subtle clothing" (有恒有上妙衣服); an opposing theory agrees as far as Śuklā is concerned, but says that it is true of only some *bodhisattvas*. The discussion about Śuklā goes on at some length, saying that she has this permanent subtle robe because of merit she earned by giving robes to the *saṃgha* of the four directions; she had it even in her mother's womb; that it magically transformed into *dharma* robes when she entered the monastic order; that it magically changed to match the size of her body as she grew; etc. On the identity of Śuklā, who was miraculously born with a pure white robe (hence her name, presumably), see Zhi Qian's *Avadānaśataka,* T200.239b17-c11; Vaidya, *Avadānaśataka* 180-182. Cf. also Frye, *The Sutra of the Wise and Foolish,* 96-98, "The Beggar Woman Gives her Clothing": Ānanda, this nun Suci was at that time that beggar woman . . ."

The text refutes a position it attributes to the Mahāsāṃghikas,[1857] that the Buddha's body is untainted ("without outflows", *anāsrava*), by arguing that were this the case, it would have been impossible that Anupamā (無比女人) should feel lust for his body,[1858] that Aṇgulīmālya would feel anger towards him, etc. Since it can be the objective support (緣, **ālambana*) for such impure emotions, "the body of birth of the Buddha is certainly not taintless (*anāsrava*)" (既緣起愛及瞋慢癡故佛生身定非無漏).[1859] When the text turns to explain a scriptural passage cited by the Mahāsāṃghika opponents, the body of birth thus shown to be tainted is further explicitly contrasted with the *dharmakāya.* The scriptural passage in question states that the Tathāgata was born in the world and dwelt in it, but was not rendered impure by worldly *dharmas*.[1860] The Vaibhāṣika retort to this is that the scriptural passage refers differentially to

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1857 T1545.391c27-28.

1858 於佛身無比女人不應起愛. For the story of Anupamā, see Rothman, "Erotics" 567-570; "The Story of Makándika the Wanderer", in Tatelman, *The Heavenly Exploits*, 310-415; despite differences in details, this clearly matches the story found in Yijing's Chinese MSV, T1442.886a19-c20, where the same Chinese translation is used for the name of Anupamā. Rothman notes that the MSV is the probable source for the *Divyāvadāna* tales he analyses, 562. In Yijing I find no direct mention of Anupamā lusting after the Buddha; in Tatelman's Skt. *Divyāvadāna,* however, the text speaks of the Lord fearing that, if he speaks "conciliatory words" to her, "she will die, sweating *with passion* (*rāgeṇa svinnā*)"; and further, recounts that when she heard him speak of her as "urine and excrement", "*passion* lost its hold over her, hatred replaced it (*tasyā yad rāgaparyavasthānam, tad vigatam, dveṣaparyavasthānam utpannam*)"; Tatelman, *Heavenly Exploits* 322-325. *Vibh* itself mentions her again elsewhere, however, with a comment that clearly presumes some variant of the *Divyāvadāna*/MSV story in which the Buddha's blunt comments about the impurity of her body, rather than aiming to prevent her dying lovelorn as in *Divyāvadāna*/MSV, are designed to quench her lust for him: "If [the Buddha] did not insult Anupamā, [saying,] 'Your body is filthy and foul, and full of impurities,' then there would have been no way for her desirous thoughts to cease;" 若不毀呰無比女人。汝身穢惡不淨充滿。即彼欲心無由止息, T1545.78a05-07. La Vallée Poussin also makes this identification, "Appendice" 770. Note that Guang Xing is thus incorrect when he translates 無比女人 just as "women", *Concept of the Buddha* 23.

1859 T1545.229a15-24, 392a04-11, 392b13-17. In his Chapter 2, Guang Xing renders *shengshen* 生身 as *rūpakāya* in translating the middle of these three passages, without any apparent justification. See *Concept of the Buddha* 23. This is one of many such instances in the chapter as a whole.

1860 如來生世住世出現世間。不爲世法所染, var. 如來生在世間長在世間。若行若住不爲世法之所染污 etc., T1545. 229a18-19, 871c02-05, etc. I have been unable to trace this claim to any Nikāya or Āgama text. It appears in a number of places in the Chinese canon, as e.g. in Xuanzang's translation of the *Bodhisattvapiṭaka* included in the *Mahāratnakuṭa* collection, T316.795c06-07; in *Dharmapāla/Dharmarakṣa's version of the *Bodhisattvapiṭaka* also, T316.795c06-07; in MSg VII (said of *tatpṛṣṭhalabdhajñāna*) T1593.128b17-18, Keenan 96, Lamotte II, 243; and again in X, said of the Tathāgata,

the "body of birth" and the *dharmakāya*; the statement that the Tathāgata was born and dwelt in the world, etc., is made with reference to ("in dependence upon") the body of birth (依生身說), whereas the statement that he was not soiled by worldly *dharmas* is made with reference to his *dharmakāya*.[1861]

Elsewhere, the "body of birth" is also spoken of, somewhat puzzlingly, in relation to "the *bodhisattva*". The text is considering the reason that the *bodhisattva* is born into the human realm, despite the fact that doctrine holds that this is the destiny earned by beings of "lower levels of good *karma*" (下品善業), which would seem to suggest that such a rebirth is incommensurable with his *karmic* status. The text compares the *bodhisattva* to "gods who have power over the products of transformation produced by of others" (*paranirmitavaśavartideva*),®[1862] and the interest for our purposes is that this comparison is couched in terms of the comparison between their various bodies. The text explains,

> "There are some (?) conditions in virtue of which the *karma* of the *bodhisattva* is superior, [that is] because the *bodhisattva's* body is based upon (所依止) limitless merits/virtues (功德), namely the [ten] powers, the [four] confidences, etc. (有餘緣故), but the *paranirmitavaśavartidevas* have nothing of the sort; [conversely], there are other conditions in virtue of which the *karma* of the *paranirmitavaśavartidevas* is superior,

131b24-25, Keenan 115, Lamotte II, 316; etc. For a fascinating echo of this passage in RGV, of all places, see n. 2617 below.

When he treats one version of this passage, Guang Xing once more incorrectly translates "body of birth" as *rūpakāya, Concept of the Buddha* 59 (Guang's reference here is to p. 671c, not 871b, but this must be an error, since this is the only place in the text where the Vaibhajyavādins and the Mahāsāṃghika are mentioned together).

[1861] T1545.229a15-b02, 391c26.392a15, 871c17-20 etc. Note that this interpretation is also found in the Saṃghabhūti version of the text, T1547.463b06-10; and in Buddhavarman/Daotai T1546.176a24-b13.

[1862] Who presumably have commensurable levels of good *karma* to the *bodhisattva,* in order that they constitute an appropriate object of comparison. These gods dwell in the sixth and highest heaven of the *kāmadhātu*. See AKBh to 3.1, VP II, 1-2; 3.69, VP II, 164, etc. The derivation of their name can be seen from the comment at AKBh to 3.71ab, "There are beings the objects of whose desires are created by others, and who exercise power over those objects of desire created by others; such are, namely, the *paranirmitavaśavartins*," (*santi sattvāḥ paranirmitakāmāḥ paranirmiteṣu kāmeṣv aiśvaryaṃ vaśe varttayanti | yad yathā devāḥ paranirmitavaśavarttinaḥ*), VP II, 166; they are opposed to the *nirmāṇarati* gods, who create the objects of their desire themselves and similarly exercise power over them.

> because the bodies of those gods are pure and subtle like the flame of a lamp, whereas the "body of birth" of the *bodhisattva* still has various excreta (便利) and impurities."[1863]

This passage seems remarkable and instructive in its doctrine in several respects.

First, it is clear here that the "body of birth" is impure. We have already seen that impurity is, in limited degree, also an acknowledged quality of the *rūpakāya* on the single rare occasion when it is imputed to the Buddha. We will also see in other passages that the "body of birth" is understood to be impure. It is clearly the case, therefore, that the "body of birth" is not utterly perfect, and this point must be borne in mind.

Second, bearing in mind the apparent identification of the *dharmakāya* in part with the eighteen *āveṇikadharmas* of the Buddha (which we will examine below), namely the ten powers, four confidences, etc., the passage is virtually proposing that *the body of the bodhisattva is based upon the dharmakāya,* which must be no less than the *dharmakāya* of the Buddha. At the very least, it is proposing that the body of the *bodhisattva* is based upon a set of *dharmas* unique to the Buddha (the very meaning of "*āveṇikadharma*").

But this immediately poses a problem of the relation between the *bodhisattva* and the Buddha of whom these qualities, or even the *dharmakāya*, is predicated. Does this Buddha already exist? If he does, is he the Buddha that this *bodhisattva* is destined to "become", or a prior Buddha? If the Buddha of those qualities is the *bodhisattva* himself, does not the existence of those *dharmas,* in order that the body of the *bodhisattva* be based upon them, mean that the *bodhisattva* is already *buddha*? But in that case, what is the meaning of the concept of *bodhisattva,* if it does not mean "one destined to become a Buddha *in future*"?

[1863] T1545.101b06-13. For an earlier (Buddhavarman/Daotai) version of this passage, which unusually speaks of the *baoshen* 報身 = **vipākakāya,* see T1546.83a21-b01.

The most plausible interpretation of the passage, I believe, is that there is already a very significant blurring of the boundaries between the concepts of *bodhisattva* and Buddha, perhaps particularly in regard to the last earthly life of the *bodhisattva,* in which he indeed becomes Buddha. Perhaps, in this sense, the term *bodhisattva* is being used only in connection with the Buddha himself in that last lifetime, in recognition or reminiscence of the fact that he is born into that life as the Bodhisattva, even if in the same lifetime he becomes Buddha. This means, however, that we have surely already come some distance from the original notion of the *bodhisattva* as the future Buddha up until the moment of his awakening under the *bodhi* tree. Indeed, if it is possible to speak of his body as "based upon" *buddhadharmas* or even the *dharmakāya,* this almost bears shades of the docetistic doctrine that the usual account of the history of body doctrines would simplistically see the Sarvâstivādins *opposing,* as it is advocated by their opponents, the Mahāsāṃghika. Such an interpretation is also redolent of ideas we normally associate more readily with the Mahāyāna, and may therefore suggest that the Sarvâstivāda are not so unadulteratedly "Mainstream" (taking that term to mean what is "not Mahāyāna") as the usual account would also lead us to believe.

Elsewhere in the text, the "body of birth" is said outright to be a body of the Buddha, once more with reference to a phase in his biography that can only refer to what we would more normally think of as his "*bodhisattva* years". We have already seen that in numerous passages the contrast between the *dharmakāya* and "body of birth" is clear. It is especially clear, however, that the contrast for the Buddha is between a "body of birth" and the *dharmakāya,* rather than a *rūpakāya* and the *dharmakāya,* in the following passage, which makes the contrast explicit ("the bodies of the Buddha are of two types"). This passage also deepens the enigma we observed immediately above, where the body *of the bodhisattva* was referred to in terms very redolent of

full-fledged buddhahood (his body is "based upon" a version of the *dharmakāya*); here, we see the term "body of the Buddha" applied clearly to the (latter end of the) *bodhisattva* phase in the Buddha's career.

The text is here discussing the "fruits of the monastic life", and in particular, a dilemma whereby the scriptures sometimes say there are four such fruits, i.e. the four grades of attainment from Stream-Enterer to Arhat,[1864] and yet also sometimes say that the life of a monk is itself one of the fruits won by "going forth".[1865]

> "There are two broad senses in which it is made manifest (現) that the Buddha is 'beyond the world' (**lokôttara,* 出世): (1) the conventional (worldly) sense (世俗, **vyāvahārika*); and (2) the ultimate sense (勝義, **pāramārthika*). The 'worldly sense' refers to his abandoning the *dharma* of the householder and taking up [that of] the non-householder, [that is,] shaving off his hair and beard and donning the monastic robe, and taking up the observance of pure precepts with a correct mind of faith. The 'ultimate sense' refers to his attainment of perfect awakening to the four noble truths. When he first went forth from domestic life, it was already made manifest that the Buddha was 'beyond the world' in the conventional sense; when, having left home, he engaged in practice (?展轉修行), it made manifest, further, that he was beyond the world in the ultimate sense. Now, when we speak of 'urging [people] to go forth from domestic life',[1866] this means urging people to cultivate (or 'imitate', 學) the Buddha's bodies (即是勸人學諸佛身); it is for this reason that the *sūtras* teach [as they do?]. To explain, the bodies of the Buddha are, broadly speaking, of two types: (1) the body of birth; (2) the body of dharma (諸佛身略有二種。一者生身。二者法身). If someone abandons the *dharma* of the householder and takes up [that of] the non-householder, shaving off hair and beard, donning the monastic robe, and taking up the observance of pure precepts with a correct mind of faith, this should be understood to be cultivating/imitating the Buddha's body of birth (學佛生身). If, on the other hand, someone engages in the cultivation of correct practice, and gives rise to perfect

[1864] See n. 897.

[1865] The text discusses this problem with discussions of the fruits of monastic life given in three texts, the *Siṃhanāda-sūtra* 師子吼經, the 善賢經?, and the 准陀經 *Cunda-sūtra* = SN 47.13; see T1545. 341b10 ff.

[1866] This topic is already at play in the text, given that it is commenting, as observed above, on the *Śrāmaṇyaphala-sūtra* = DN2, i.e. discussing the point of becoming a monk; see 341b10 ff.

awakening to the four noble truths, this should be understood to be cultivating/imitating the Buddha's body of dharma (學佛法身)."[1867]

The following points, at least, are of special interest in this rich passage. (1) The Buddha, *qua* Buddha (and not as an ordinary sentient being) does indeed have two kinds of body, but that they are his "body of birth" (not a **rūpakāya*) and his *dharmakāya*; (2) that *both* are extraordinary (**lokôttara*), that is, that neither, strictly speaking, is just the ordinary given body possessed by other, radically imperfect sentient beings; (3) that the Buddha's *dharmakāya* is, once more, associated with his attainment of *bodhi* (a point to which we will return below); (4) that, strictly speaking, the category of the Buddha's "body of birth", despite the impression that its name might give, is only spoken of as such (or at least, its "cultivation" is only spoken of) from the moment of departure from the household life, but this means, notably, that it seems that it becomes pertinent *before* the Buddha becomes *buddha,* in other words, either that it is a body of a *future* Buddha, or that the text is proposing some nascent idea of buddhahood prior to the four watches under the *bodhi* tree in the Buddha's biography; (5) that the monastic life is conceived of very broadly as an endeavour to cultivate (and therefore, presumably, eventually to realise) these two kinds of *body* of the Buddha.

Among these various implications of the passage, perhaps the most thought-provoking is that the body of birth is predicated explicitly as a "body of the Buddha", even with regard to events in his biography that occur *prior* to the moment where, strictly speaking, he *becomes buddha.* In this connection, it is not without interest that the text speaks of these various dimensions of the Buddha as ways of "making manifest" (現) his transcendent status (as "beyond the world", *lokôttara*). One thus derives from this passage a distinct impression that even in this

[1867] T1545.342c14-25. The Buddhavarman/Daotai version of this same passage is very underdeveloped by comparison, and makes no mention of bodies: 佛出世間。眾生入法凡有二種。一假名。二真實。假名者。剃除鬚髮而被法服正信出家。真實者。起世第一法。次第能入苦法忍, T1546.4c05-08.

Sarvâstivādin context, where we might last expect it on the basis of traditional accounts of such matters, we can detect a tacit agreement with the basic docetistic premise that the Buddha's biography – even those parts of it that apparently *precede* his awakening – are an expedient show, mounted by an already perfected, omniscient, omnipotent Buddha, designed to lead beings (or even to give them a model for practice *in imitatio buddhi,* as seems to be the understanding here). Such an understanding would more stereotypically be expected in Mahāsāṃghika contexts among the schools, or in Mahāyāna proper. Yet it seems to me that only in light of such an assumption can we can make sense of the claim that the "body of birth" is a special body *of the Buddha,* which seems clearly to be the case, on the one hand, and the fact that it is specifically defined here as a property of the Buddha prior to his awakening, on the other.

It is also of no small interest, given that we are more generally trying to ascertain the veracity of the usual assumption that the general flow of shared ideas about embodiment should be *from* Mainstream contexts *to* Mahāyāna ones, that this passage, as we just noted, entertains a model of practice *in imitatio buddhi* (學佛 . . . 身) at all, an idea we would stereotypically say is more characteristic of Mahāyāna contexts.

Thus, we have seen so far that, in contrast to the paucity of discussion of the *rūpakāya* where the Buddha in particular is at issue, the text consistently uses the term "body of birth" to refer to his physical body in his last incarnation. A few times in the text, we also find this same body spoken of in even more specific terms. In such passages, the text speaks of a "body born of father and mother" (*fumushengshen* 父母生身, Skt. **mātṛpitṛkasaṃbhavakāya*).[1868]

[1868] In his translation of MPPŚ, Lamotte reconstructs this term **pitṛmātṛjakāya;* see e.g. "Traité" 513. On the basis of the fact that the Pāli text gives *mātāpettikasambhavo,* however, I have thought it more

Now, this way of speaking about embodiment is surely not minted *de novo* in this context, though, as we shall see, it is being given a new twist. This term is, in fact, as we saw in §2.3.3, traceable back to the oldest layers of Buddhist literature, in the *Sāmaññaphala-sutta,* DN2, where, as we saw, the monk at an advanced stage of practice prepares himself for the elaboration of a *manomayakāya* (in what we called the "snake slough" model) by coming to the realisation:

> "This my body is material (*rūpī*), made up from the four great elements, born of mother and father (*mātāpettikasambhavo,* more lit. "parentally engendered"), fed on rice and gruel, impermanent, liable to be injured and abraded, broken and destroyed, and this is my consciousness which is bound to it and dependent on it."[1869]

Now, while it is of course the case that this passage indeed also notes that the dissatisfactory given body to be transcended is composed of visible material form (*rūpī*), it also seems notable that *Vibh* has picked up *not* that characterisation, which it regularly applies to different uses, but rather the notion of being born of parents. There is evidence in the text that under the aegis of this term, *Vibh* makes a systematic distinction not found in the apparent DN 2 source of the notion of **mātṛpitṛkasaṃbhavakāya.*

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accurate to suggest *mātṛpitṛsaṃbhava,* and to call this body **mātṛpitṛsaṃbhavakāya* as a matter of convenience, though I do not know that the latter term is attested in Skt.

[1869] See above p. 252. Aside from its recurrence throughout DN in repetitions of the whole DN 2 model, his formula is also found at SN 55.21 "Mahānāma", when the Buddha is counselling the Sakyan Mahānāma not to fear death: "Don't be afraid, Mahānāma! . . . Your death will not be a bad one, your demise will not be a bad one. When a person's mind (*citta*) has been fortified over a long time by faith, virtue, learning, generosity, and wisdom, right here (*idheva*) crows, vultures, hawks, dogs, jackals, or various creatures eat his *body, consisting of form, composed of the four great elements, originating from mother and father, built up out of rice and gruel, subject to impermanence, to being worn and rubbed away, to breaking apart and dispersal.* But his mind, which has been fortified over a long time by faith, virtue, learning, generosity and wisdom – that goes upwards, goes to distinction" (my emphasis). This is likened to a pot of ghee submerged in water and shattered. The shards of the broken pot sink to the bottom, but the ghee rises up to the surface; so the body and mind on death. Bodhi 1808-1809.

Vibh says several things about the Buddha's body under this head of **mātṛpitṛkasaṃbhavakāya,* not all of which are necessarily mutually compatible or instantly comprehensible to someone as unschooled as myself.

For example, in discussing the Buddha as the object of the ritual act of taking refuge, it explicitly opposes the **mātṛpitṛkasaṃbhavakāya* to the *dharmakāya* (understood as "the *aśaikṣadharmas* that comprise *bodhi*"[1870]). Under this head, it states that one does not take refuge in the Buddha's "body comprised of head, neck, belly, back, hands, feet etc."; "this body born of father and mother is a defiled (*sâsrava*) *dharma,* and is not the object of refuge-taking".[1871] In other words, here, the emphasis seems to be on the fact that the **mātṛpitṛkasaṃbhavakāya* is defiled (as we saw seems in part to be the view of the *rūpakāya* insofar as it is ascribed to the Buddha, which can in some cases at least be taken as the object of the meditation on impurity), that is, imperfect.

[1870] We will return to this definition of the *dharmakāya,* and discuss this passage further in that regard, below.

[1871] 歸依佛者。歸依如來頭項腹背。及手足等所合成身。今顯此身父母生長是有漏法非所歸依。所歸依者謂佛無學成菩提法即是法身, 1545.177a14-18; la Vallée Poussin, "Documents" 75. This passage is already found in the Buddhavarman/Daotai version of the text, for which see below n. 2094, though not the Saṃghabhūti. For a similar idea differently expressed, see AKBh 4.32, which states similarly that one takes refuge in the *aśaik adharmas* that comprise a Buddha, etc. (we will examine this conception of the *dharmakāya* in more detail below), and contrasts it, in less graphic terms than the present passage, with precisely the *rūpakāya* (which our text avoids): "As for the *rūpakāya* of the Buddha, it has undergone no modification in virtue of the acquisition of the qualities of a Buddha. Thus one does not take refuge in the *rūpakāya* of the Buddha which is, in fact, the *rūpakāya* of the Bodhisattva"; see VP III, 77. Note that if this passage is indeed talking, under the head of the term *rūpakāya,* about the body termed "body of birth" in *Vibh,* then there is a clear contradiction between this last statement and clear indications that the "body of birth" is understood in *Vibh* to be rendered quite remarkable in virtue of the attainment of buddhahood. See also, however, AKBh to 7.34, which apparently contradicts this present AK passage by clearly stating that perfection of the *rūpakāya* is among four perfections of fruit/effect/result brought about by the acquisition of the *dharmakāya*: VP V, 82. This perfection of the *rūpakāya* is explained to entail perfection of the (1) major and (2) minor marks, (3) of strength (the Buddha becomes possessed of the strength called *nārāyaṇa),* and, (4) (i) "internally" (*adhyātmam*), that the Buddha attains the "perfection of a body (*śarīra*) of which the bones are like adamant" (*vajrasārāsthisampat*), and (ii) "externally", that he emits rays of light surpassing those of 100,000 suns; VP V, 84.

Elsewhere, however, the emphasis is on ways the Buddha's **mātṛpitṛkasaṃbhavakāya* is extraordinary when compared with the ordinary bodies of other beings. For example, in a passage[1872] that strikes me, quite frankly, as a bit wacky, the Buddha tells Ānanda that he can travel in a *manomayakāya* to the Brahmā Heavens, which as we already saw is a claim seen as far back as SN 51.7.3.2, "The Iron Ball".[1873] On this occasion, however, Ānanda is distinctly unimpressed; he points out that since Śrāvakas[1874] can also achieve this, it is a pretty mediocre feat (何其劣哉!) and that it isn't really much for the Buddha to brag about (世尊何足自歎). Hasn't the Buddha got something unique about him? Ānanda then asks whether the Buddha can make the same journey, i.e. to the Brahmā heaven in an instant, in his *body born of father and mother, comprised of the material great elements*[1875] (麁大種父母生身); the Buddha replies that indeed he can, at which Ānanda is at last genuinely impressed;[1876] as well might we be, considering that in DN 2, the first time we came across the conception of the **mātṛpitṛkasaṃbhavakāya,* it was sloughed off precisely as preparation for travel to such rarefied realms, and travel to such rarified realms seemed definitionally to require a different kind of body. In fact, Ānanda finds this claim so hard to understand that he asks for an analogy, in

[1872] As we will see below, this passage can be traced back at least to the *Prajñaptiśāstra*; see below n. 2039. This seems to mean that, in the context of the seven canonical texts preceding *Vibh* in the Sarvâstivāda Abhidharma literature, it is the oldest among all the various passages about the Buddha's embodiments found in *Vibh.*

[1873] See above p. 237.

[1874] It is interesting, in light of the general methodological questions that concern us here about the possibility that Sarvâstivāda scholastic sources like *Vibh* might adopt Mahāyāna ideas, that the text is capable of being so derogatory about Śrāvakas.

[1875] My emphasis. Note that the addition of this element to the description further confirms that the notion of the *fumushengshen* is probably derived from the DN 2 pericope.

[1876] 契經中說。佛告阿難。我之神力能以意所成身倏爾至於梵世。阿難白佛。何其劣哉。此事聲聞亦能。世尊何足自歎。謂所化作名意所成身。聲聞亦能以此至於梵世。佛若爾者有何不共。世尊頗能離神通力。以麁大種父母生身。於倏忽間至梵世不。世尊告曰。此我亦能。阿難復言。此事實難, T1545.699a20-26.

response to which the Buddha uses a fascinating metallurgical image:[1877] just as iron, when placed in a furnace, becomes light, soft, pliable and pure, and can be shaped in accordance with desire, so too [?] the Buddha's body transforms in accordance with the dictates of his mind (如來身隨心轉).[1878]

In this case, then, the Buddha's "body born of father and mother" is most specifically stated to have capabilities *not* included in the ordinary body of other sentient beings, which fact makes it seem unlikely, given that as we saw *rūpakāya* is routinely predicated of other beings and only once of the Buddha, that the *fumushengshen/*mātṛpitṛkasaṃbhavakāya* is to be identified with the *rūpakāya*.

Another passage also makes it clear that the Buddha's **mātṛpitṛsāṃbhavikakāya* is not any kind of ordinary body that he might share with other sentient beings, when it uses this term for the body in which the Buddha is possessed of the prodigious physical strength that allows him to win a contest against a gaggle of strongmen.[1879]

[1877] The application of the imagery of metallurgy to the description of bodily transformation might make us think vaguely of alchemical notions of corporeal perfection.

[1878] T1545.699a27-b02. The text goes on to explore various attempts to account for this claim, or even decide whether it is to be believed; we might sympathise with the good doctors in these difficulties.

[1879] This passage is already found in the Buddhavarman/Daotai version of the text, though not in Saṃghabhūti; see below, n. 2093. The Buddha wins this contest when none of the strongmen have been able to move a boulder lying in the road that is sixty cubits by thirty. The Buddha taunts the strongmen ("Come on, you bunch of babies, what do you think you're doing?" 汝諸童子欲何所作), and then, having made sure they are standing back well out of harm's way, flicks the boulder up with his toe and catches it in his hand; flings it high into the air and catches it again; blows it to smithereens with his breath; and then returns it to its original state and puts it back on the road where it came from. The text explains that while it was by his power of *abhijñā* that he blew it to bits and by his power of 勝解 (**adhimokṣa*?, "resolve"?) that he returned it to its original state, it was by the power of his "body born of father and mother" that he could fling it about with such gay abandon; T1545.156a13-29. It is specified that this strength is "not shared" with any other sentient beings, but possessed "only by the (or 'a'?) *bodhisattva* in his final lifetime" 此力不共一切有情唯最後身菩薩得有, T1545.156b12-13. We already saw above that in another part of the same passage, the text states that this prodigious strength begins to wane after the

In short, then, it seems that in *Vibh,* we see that the notion of **mātṛpitṛkasaṃbhavakāya,* which in the earliest context we know for it of DN 2 was an epithet specifically of the ordinary material body of any practitioner (not just the Buddha) as part of the characterisation of the radically imperfect and dissatisfactory nature of that body, has taken on very new meanings. It is now used specifically to refer to the visible, physical, tangible embodiment of the Buddha in the world, and it does not seem to be readily predicated of other beings, except where, and in so far as, the text recognises the possibility of other beings imitating the Buddha's embodiments and thereby becoming like him. This special body of the Buddha also has a number of remarkable properties that would not have been predicated of the ordinary embodiment in the DN 2 model: it has superhuman physical strength; it is, remarkably, possible for the Buddha alone to travel in it to the Brahmā Heaven, that is, without necessarily elaborating a *manomayakāya* for the purpose; as part of the justification of this latter claim, it seems also to be imagined that this body is malleable to the will of the Buddha, and perhaps subject to infinite arbitrary transformation; and yet it nonetheless is *not* entirely perfect, being impure, and therefore inappropriate as an object of the ritual act of taking refuge.

In closing this section, it is of no small interest for us to note that the term "body born of father and mother" seems to be a relatively unusual locution in the Chinese canon as a whole. The term (var. 父母生身, 父母所生身, 父母所生其身, 父母所生之身) is only found approx. 78

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age of fifty, though it also stipulates that the Buddha even thereafter is possessed of levels of strength otherwise very rare; see n. 1850.

Note further that AKBh, in discussing the prodigious physical strength of the Buddha, states explicitly, in contrast to the discussion here, that the body concerned is of the essence of a "tangible" (*spraṣṭavyâyatanasvabhāva*), made of the four elements, but of a special kind (*mahābhūtaviśeṣa*); leading to the conclusion that it is of *upādāyarūpa,* but different from the seven normal kinds, etc.; VP V, 74. This leads to the conclusion that even for AKBh, if the Buddha's physical body is a *rūpakāya,* it can only be in the terms of a rather special kind of *rūpa*.

times in the texts contained in the CBETA Reader.[1880] We can very quickly eliminate for our purposes most of these hits, because they occur in commentarial literature too late to really be relevant to the comparison with *Vibh* itself. Only 32 instances of the term then remain in *sūtra* and *śāstra* literature, and with one exception, all texts in which the term occurs are roughly as late or later than Buddhavarman, and all but one[1881] feature the term only once each.[1882] The only texts in which the term occurs more than once are the Buddhavarman and Xuanzang versions of *Vibh,* and Kumārajīva's **Mahāprajñāpāramitā-śāstra* (MPPŚ).

MPPŚ, being earlier than either of these versions of *Vibh* (and Buddhabhadra, who uses the term once) thus emerges as the earliest translation in which the term appears, and, given that the term occurs there seven times,[1883] the single text in which it occurs most often – the veritable epicentre of this rare term's use. It is certainly worth our while to look briefly at the way the term is used there, therefore.

The most interesting point of contrast to *Vibh* itself is that, where the "body born of father and mother" occurs in *Vibh* in opposition to the *dharmakāya* as part of a broadly "two-body" theory of the Buddha's embodiments, the term is used in MPPŚ as part of an apparent nascent theory that is grappling with the question of more than two bodies, though in a very different way to "classic" Yogācāra *trikāya* theory. Thus, the "body born of father and mother"/"body of birth"

[1880] I used version 2.0.75 for this search, containing vols. 1-55 and 85 of the Taishō, and *Zokuzōkyō* 78-86.

[1881] Śubhākarasiṃha's T906 and 般剌蜜諦's T945; see n. 1882 immediately below.

[1882] In rough chronological order: in Bodhiruci, T310.323a01-08, T310.683c18-28, T761.631c02-08; in Prajāruci, T354.232b12-15; in Jñānagupta (Sui), T310.613b03-11; in Yijing, T1448.38b08-10; in Devākara (Tang) repeats Jñānagupta verbatim T347.182a15-22; in 般剌蜜諦 (Tang) T945.119b03-10, 137c25-28; in Amoghavajra, T961.333c17, T1000.594b20, T1133.575b20-23 (and in parallels to this text), T1665.574c21-22; in Śubhākarasiṃha, T906.913b09-10, 914a17-18.

[1883] T1509.90a17-20, esp. 121c26-122a05, esp. also 131c06-08, 620a27-b06, 624c15-18; in Buddhabhadra, T643.692c17-693a01.

is sometimes opposed to *dharma*[*tā*]*kāya,* and sometimes to an apparent prototype of the *nairmāṇikakāya.*[1884] This is immediately apparent from the following two key passages, each of which in its own way offers a definition of the "body born of father and mother":

> "Further, the Buddha has two bodies: (1) the body of *dharmatā* (法性身, **dharmatākāya*); and (2) the body born of father and mother (父母生身). The **dharmatākāya* fills the space of the ten directions; it is infinite and boundless; it is handsome in visible form, and ornamented by the major and minor marks; [it is characterised by] infinite light and infinite sound,[1885] and the throngs of sentient beings that listen to [its] Dharma also fill space.[1886] It constantly emits all kinds of bodies, all kinds of words and names, all kinds of rebirth destinies, and all kinds of expedient means (*upāya*) in order to save sentient beings; it constantly saves all [beings], without a moment's rest. In this manner, the Buddha in his **dharmatākāya* (法性身佛) saves sentient beings in the worlds of the ten directions. It is the Buddha in his body of birth (生身佛)[, on the other hand,] who undergoes the retribution for sins. The Buddha in his body of birth teaches the Dharma in sequence, as if it were a human *dharma.* Because there are these two kinds of Buddha, there is nothing wrong with the fact that the Buddha undergoes retribution for sins."[1887]

> "It is fitting to ask these questions[1888] of a man, but it is not fitting to ask them even of the gods; how much the more so of a Buddha? [Reply:] The Buddha has two kinds of body: (1) the body of transformation (變化身[1889]) [created by] his supernormal powers (神通, *abhijñā*); (2) the body born of father and mother (父母生身). The body born of father and mother assumes the conditions of human [existence] (受人法), and so it is not like [that of] a god. For this reason, one should inquire of the Buddha in accordance with human custom."[1890]

[1884] The presence in MPPŚ, at this date, of this nascent three-body theory is in itself of great interest, and has not been considered, to my knowledge, in its bearing upon the supposed genesis of *trikāya* theory in Yogācāra literature in the secondary scholarship to date.

[1885] Note that these qualities, which we might broadly describe under the rubric of the "body of marks", would normally be ascribed to the **rūpakāya* in the secondary literature; their ascription here to the *dharma*[*tā*]*kāya* is possibly significant.

[1886] An interlinear note here reads "These sentient beings are also **dharmatākāya,* and cannot be seen by people in *saṃsāra.*"

[1887] T1509.121c26-122a05, Lamotte, *Traité* 513.

[1888] Referring to questions posed by Ratnākara to the Buddha about his health and welfare, which might imply the Buddha's imperfection and vulnerability.

[1889] Lamotte here confidently reconstructs **nirmāṇakāya,* which seems apt enough, but nonetheless perhaps still uncertain.

[1890] T1509.131c05-08, Lamotte, *Traité* 585. Note that the opposition between the "body born of father and mother" and the body of transformation also features in the following question, though it does not recur

Thus, we see that the Kumārajīva translation of MPPŚ is the earliest text in the Chinese canon to make use of the term "body born of father and mother"; that it uses that term more than any other text; and that it uses it, in part, in the context of an apparently emergent theory more complex than "two-body" theory, while yet not matching "classic" *trikāya* theory as it is found among the Yogācāra. We will also see below that the same text makes much more extensive use of the concept of *rūpakāya* than any of the *Vibhāṣā* texts. It thus appears that MPPŚ may be something of a hotbed of doctrinal ferment with regard to the Buddha's bodies more generally, and in light of the usual scholarly opinion that it represents a hybrid of Sarvâstivāda scholasticism and Prajñāpāramitā doctrine, which might place it relatively close within the same cultural orbit as *Vibh* itself, we should at least consider the possibility that the concept of the "body born of father and mother" may have originated in the context of its proto-*trikāya* deliberations, and found its way thence into a still-accreting *Vibh,* rather than the direction of borrowing running the other way.

Even if we cannot decide the question of the direction of borrowing or influence, we should certainly note that the term "body born of father and mother", otherwise relatively rare, is tightly concentrated in two texts, viz. *Vibh* (in two versions) and MPPŚ. It may not be coincidence that both of these texts appear in the Chinese record within three decades of one another, and that thereafter, the flash-in-the-pan fad for this term seems rapidly to fade, and it retreats to the margins of body discourse. This may be an indication that at least those passages ruminating on the Buddha's bodies that contain this unusual term might date to a time quite close to the time of composition of MPPŚ, and perhaps the time of translation of

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in the answer: 問曰。乃至不生一念瞋心者。爲是變化身。爲是父母生身。若是變化身則不足爲奇。若是父母生身未斷結人。云何能不生一念瞋心, T1509.624c15-18.

both texts, and therefore that *Vibh* itself was open and receiving further contents by accretion this late in its history, a possibility to which we will return below.[1891]

We now turn our attention to one final passage, in which the "body of birth" is discussed in a context that provides us with the greatest amount of technical detail about its meaning of any passage in the text.

4.4.5 The "body of birth" (and *rūpakāya*) in the context of ideas about *sôpadhiśeṣa-* and *nirupadhiśeṣanirvāṇa*

The section of the text in which the notion of the "body of birth" features most prominently is in fact a discussion of the differences between *sôpadhiśeṣa-* and *nirupadhiśeṣanirvāṇa* (有/無餘依涅槃), "Nirvāṇa with and without a support".[1892] Here we have the opportunity to take up, in an unexpected quarter, another strand in this larger study.

Let us recall our findings in the Appendix to Chapter 3 (Chapter 3.4) on the supposed Pāli-canonical antecedents to the later corporeal reading of this pair of concepts. As we already noted there, secondary scholars have, on the whole and with some notable exceptions, been too ready to accept the claims of the tradition that this pair of concepts has roots in the Pāli canon itself, and have therefore tended to overlook the actual senses in which the terms are used there. We saw that the idea of "a vestige of clinging" (*saupādisesa-, sopādisesa-*) at first referred to a category of people who were destined to be liberated, but who still had to undergo

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[1891] See p. 957.

[1892] Readers who are confused by the fact that these terms suddenly have different translations are asked to refer to the explanation immediately below.

further rebirths before they finally realised that destiny. This category was opposed to those who are liberated "here in this visible world", i.e. in the here and now (*diṭṭhe dhammeva*).

Over time, however, through the course of a complex web of developments whose interrelations seem unlikely to ever become entirely clear to us, the concept of *saupādisesa* came gradually to be opposed to an idea of *anupādisesa,* "without a vestige of clinging", and the two in opposition also came to be applied to a twofold typology of different kinds of "Nibbāna element/realm" (*nibbānadhātu*). This development perhaps begins with *Itivuttaka* 44, a passage which we saw is highly anomalous in the Pāli canon and also not as entirely reconcilable with later ideas as has usually been thought; but it continues over a long period of time, and the new interpretation coexisted alongside remnants of the older one, sometimes in the same texts, down at least to the turn of the fifth century in the Chinese translation record.

In their opposition to one another, *saupādisesa-* and *anupādisesanibbānadhātu*(Skt. *sôpadhiśeṣa-* and *nirupadhiśeṣanirvāṇadhātu*) came to be interpreted to refer not to different categories of liberated persons, but to different phases or states of bodily concomitants to the attainment of enlightenment in the same person. That is to say, the terms took on a corporeal significance, which is where they truly enter into the consideration of the questions that concern us in this dissertation. On this far more well-known conception of *upadhi-śeṣa,* it refers to the physical body of a person as a "remnant" of that which is clung *to,* namely, to the *skandhas* as objects of clinging. When a person is initially liberated, but their physical body continues to live, they are *sôpadhiśeṣa,* that is, they still have a remnant of these *"skandhas* clung to", and their attainment is referred to as "[the] Nirvāṇa [element/domain] with a vestige of clinging". When the same person's physical body finally dies, or "breaks up", they enter into "[the] Nirvāṇa [element] without a vestige of clinging", an event which came to be known by the special term *parinirvāṇa.*

As a part of this change in meaning of the terms, the element *upadhi* itself came to be reinterpreted to mean "basis, ground, substratum", a shift reflected in the ("New") Chinese translation of this element of the term as *yi* 依 "basis, ground, support" and not *yu* 餘 "excess, remainder". Even though it might be in principle conceivable to read Pāli *upādi* "clinging" to refer to the *object of clinging,* we already saw in Chapter 3.4 that this was not in fact the reading applied in the Pāli canon, and this shift to *upadhi* may perhaps therefore be explained in part by it making more sense to speak of the body of *skandhas* as a "support" than a "clung[-to-thing]". Be that as it may, this shift in terminology will also be reflected in my translation below, where I will speak of Nirvāṇa "with/without support" rather than a "remainder".

At the end of Chapter 3.4, I traced something of the post-Pāli-canonical vicissitudes of these ideas, primarily as witnessed through the evidence of the Chinese canon, and showed that for a very long time indeed the old reading of these concepts coexisted alongside the new reading, which crept in alongside it into many contexts in the Āgamas, in particular, where comparative textual evidence would suggest it was not originally present (see §3.4.6). However, I also ended that same treatment by noting that I had skirted around evidence to be found in the present text, i.e. the *Vibh,* promising to take up its consideration in the context of the analysis of ideas of embodiment in the text as a whole in the present section of this dissertation.[1893] Now is the time to make good on that promise, and turn our attention to the study of an extended passage in *Vibh* that elaborates the notion of "body of birth" (**sāṃbhavikakāya*) in the conjunction with the corporeal (re-)interpretation of *sôpadhiśeṣa-* and *nirupadhiśeṣanirvāṇadhātu*.

[1893] See above p. 432.

In this passage, the difference between the two types of *nirvāṇa* is said to stem from the fact that in the former, the life(-force) is not yet exhausted, and (therefore?) the physical form comprised of the four elements (=*mahābhūta*; 大種造色) still continues; because of this, mind (*citta*) and associated *dharmas* (*caitāsikadharmāḥ*) continue to arise in dependence upon this physical form, which is their basis (*yi* 依, cf. **āśraya*?). The characterisation of Nirvāṇa without remainder, later in the passage, is naturally the converse of this state in all respects. Now, in the course of the passage, this "physical form" (*se* 色, *rūpa*) is identified first with the "body of the five sense-organs" (五根身, *pañcêndriyakāya*) and then with *rūpakāya*: "[The phrase] 'physical form comprised of the elements' refers in general to the *rūpakāya*" (大種造色者總顯色身). Most importantly for our current purposes, however, the text also speaks in the same connection of the Arhat's remaining physical body as a "body of birth".

The mention of *rūpakāya* and "body of birth" in this passage might lead us to suspect, despite the fact that the text consistently speaks of the Buddha's bodies in terms other than those of *rūpakāya,* that the two bodies are to be identified, and therefore that received scholarly opinion is justified in thinking that Sarvâstivāda Abhidharma as represented by *Vibh* predicates a *rūpakāya* as a special body of the Buddha. For this reason alone, the present passage deserves to be considered carefully (though to my knowledge it has not received such consideration in prior literature). It is also important, however, because it articulates two important sets of ideas about the bodies of Buddhas (or, in this case, Arhats more generally), viz. the "body of birth" and *sôpadhiśeṣanirvāṇadhātu* on the corporeal interpretation; and because it provides us with an extremely clear definition of what is meant by "body of birth" in this latter context.

In light of the historical interest of the passage, as possibly one of the earliest extended treatments of the "corporeal" reading of *sôpadhiśeṣa-* and *nirupadhiśeṣanirvāṇadhātu,* in addition

to its importance for the present attempt to correct prior misunderstandings of the *Vibhāṣā* twofold model of the Buddha's embodiments, it has seemed worthwhile to translate the bulk of the passage, even though it is quite long. It also seemed worth giving the passage in full because it is difficult to understand the full implications of the terms *rūpakāya* and "body of birth" as they appear in this passage without the full technical context in which they appear. Text from the root-text upon which *Vibh* is commenting is given in bold (and marked JñP, i.e. *Jñānaprasthāna*).[1894] Passages to do with the doctrine of embodiment are underlined to make them easy to identify amid the tangle of other concepts. I have also numbered the *Vibh* paragraphs arbitrarily[1895] for convenience of discussion below.[1896]

> "[JñP:] **It says in the *sūtras,* 'There are two kinds of *nirvāṇadhātu,* namely the *nirvāṇadhātu* with a remaining support, and the *nirvāṇadhātu* without a remaining support,'**[1897] etc. etc.
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> <1> "[*Vibh*:] Why does [the root text] engage in this disputation? In order to trace out the detailed ramifications of the message of the *sūtra* (爲廣分別契經義). . . . Although the *sūtras* say this, they do not elaborate on the distinction in detail (不廣辨) [to say]

[1894] At T1544.923b12-19. This passage is also already contained in the earlier Saṃghadeva/Fonian JñP, for which see T1543.777c14-22.

[1895] The paragraph divisions themselves, of course, are also my own imposition on the text.

[1896] This passage already appears in the Buddhavarman/Daotai version of the text, though not in the Saṃghabhūti; see below n. 2091. I have noted places where the Buddhavarman/Daotai version of the text is significantly at variance in the notes; thus I note the absence of passages in Buddhavarman/Daotai, but where they are present and do not vary significantly I have not explicitly noted the fact. I summarise these differences below p. 948, in the context of my overall discussion of that version of the text.

[1897] Perhaps the most significant variation between Buddhavarman/Daotai and Xuanzang is that the very *terms* under discussion here are rendered by Buddhavarman and Daotai 有餘身涅槃界 and 無餘身涅槃界, T1546.126a08-09, that is (in a translation that reflects the parallels to the Xuanzang, terminology, in order that the difference is clear) "the *nirvāṇadhātu* with/out a remainder of *body*". For the sake of fluency in translation, I have rendered this below "the *nirvāṇadhātu* with/out a vestigial body". This term appears only in the present text and in one text by Wŏnhyo (T1769.243c06-23) in the entirety of the Chinese canon. Note that it is not only very clear, from this translation, that it is the corporeal reading that is at play here, but it also shows the extent to which the "vestige", understood strictly as all of the five *skandhas,* was understood with primary reference to the body. This provides further support, incidentally, for the possibility that the whole *skandha* model is also a model of embodiment, a possibility that has challenging implications, especially in the interpretation of members of the schema like *vijñāna, saṃjñā,* etc., implications I intend to pursue elsewhere.

what is the *nirvāṇadhātu* with a remainder of support, and what is the *nirvāṇadhātu* without a remainder of support. This is the basis for the present disputation, that those points not distinguished in the *sūtra* should now be distinguished . . . .

"[JñP:] **What, then, is the *nirvāṇadhātu* with a remainder of support? If an Arhat, a person in whom taints (諸漏, *āsrava*) are eternally exhausted, nonetheless still has life (壽命), the 'series (相續 *saṃtāna*) of physical form constituted by the gross elements (大種造色) is not yet severed, and, based upon (**āśritya*) that body of the five senses (依五根身), the series (相續 *saṃtāna, saṃtati*) of mind [still] functions, because there is a remaining support. This eternal cessation of the fetters (諸結, *saṃyojanāni*), [but with continued] apprehension (得獲, **pratyanubhāvanā*) and experience (觸證, **pratisaṃveda*),[1898] is called 'the *nirvāṇadhātu* with a remainder of support' (*sôpadhiśeṣanirvāṇadhātu*).[1899]**

<2> "[*Vibh*:] Here, **'life'** refers to the 'faculty of life[-force]' (命根, *jīvitêndriya*).[1900] Why does the text not mention the mutual identity [of sentient beings] ([眾]同分, *[*sattva*-]*sabhāga*[*tā*])?[1901] Because it is a mere whim of the author, etc.[1902] Again, however, if he should have mentioned it but did not, we should know that there is a further intent here. Further, then, he only speaks of [faculty of life-force], out of [the two categories at issue], because the faculty of life[-force] and the mutual identity [of sentient beings] are both alike effects of the *karma* that determines existence *per se* (牽引業,

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[1898] Cf. *Iti* 44, "the five faculties still persist, as a result of whose non-disappearance he *receives* that which is charming and otherwise, *experiences* pleasure and pain" (*manāpāmanāpaṃ paccanubhoti sukhadukkhaṃ paṭisaṃvedeti*), contrasted to a state in which "all that is sensed right here, not being rejoiced in, will become cold" (*idheva sabbavedayitāni anabhinanditāni sīti bhavissanti*); Masefield 35.

[1899] These two sentences have also been translated by la Vallée Poussin, AK IV, 211 n. 3, who, however, takes them from *Vibh*, and does not note that they are also found in JñP.

[1900] *Jīvitêndriya* is a *cittaviprayuktadharma* (a *dharma* not associated with mind). Collett Cox translates "vitality", *Disputed Dharmas* 289 ff. Note that this definition of *sôpadhiśeṣanirvāṇa* is echoed in the *Viniścayasaṃgrahaṇī* of YBh; see below n. 2525.

[1901] In the Sarvâstivāda Abhidharma, *sabhāga*[*tā*] is a *cittaviprayuktadharma* (a *dharma* not associated with mind) which accounts for the mutual identity (categorical stability) of sentient beings over multiple incarnations, such that they remain sentient beings always and do not become insentient things like stones. Clearly, the commentator asks here why this *dharma* was not mentioned because it, in addition to the *jīvitêndriya,* is a condition of the ongoing possession of a living human body at issue in the category of *sôpadhiśeṣa-*. Collett Cox translates "the homogeneous character"; *Disputed Dharmas* 229 ff. (This sense of *sabhāga* is to be distinguished from that found at e.g. AK 1.39b-d and Bh, VP I, 75-78.)

[1902] 是作論者意欲爾故乃至廣說. This appears to be an abbreviated way of stating a frequent comment on the particularities of the root text, which in a fuller form reads "Just because the disputant wanted to. He disputes thus in accordance with his whim; [in so doing] he does not contravene the nature of the case (lit. 'the nature of [the] *dharma*[*s*]), and so why would he bother arguing the point? 彼作論者意欲爾故。隨彼意欲而作此論。不違法性何煩徵詰, T1545.5b21-22, c21-22, 23c25-27 etc. In other words, such a comment on a feature of the root text means that it is merely an inconsequential quirk of the root author's mode of expression.

ākṣepakakarma),[1903] but of these, the faculty of life[-force] is entirely (一向) an effect of a cause heterogeneous to itself (異熟, *vaipākika*).[1904] It is on the basis of this remaining physical form that mind etc. [i.e. and associated *dharmas*] continue to function.[1905]

[1903] Lit. "*karma* that throws, casts (*ā/kṣip*), lays down" etc., i.e. the consequential act (*karma*) that "projects" (VP) a sentient being into a specific existence characterised by certain general conditions, such as human existence, existence as a hell being, etc. (or " lays down" the basic conditions of that existence for that sentient being), prior to any particular features of that specific existence (being *this or that* human, here or there, etc.). Opposed to 滿業 (prob. *paripūrakakarma*, cf. AK 95b *anekaṃ paripūrakam*, "the act(s) that *fill out* [that destiny] are not singular"), which leads to the particular conditions of the new existence (rather than human rebirth *per se*). Vasubandhu compares these two types of *karma* respectively to a single line with which an artist delimits the border of a picture (*ākṣepakakarma*) and the details with which he fills in that border (**paripūrakakarma*); AKBh to 4.95b, VP III, 199-200. See also Cox, *Disputed Dharmas* 110, where she uses the excellent translation terms "skeletal" for *ākṣepaka* and "fleshing [out]" for *paripūraka.* These two types of *karma* are also called, in Ch. translations, 一業 "single act" (**ekakarma*) and "various acts" 別業 (**anekakarma*), e.g. in the Buddhavarman/Daotai *Vibh,* T1546.82b16; for which cf. AK 4.95a-b, *ekaṃ janmākṣipaty ekam anekaṃ paripūrkakam*, "a single [act] projects a single birth, but various [acts] fill it out", VI III, 198-199. Later Chinese commentators were to refer to *the fruits of* these two types of *karma* respectively by the sensible labels of *zongbao* 總報 "general reward" and *biebao* 別報 "specific reward"; so esp. Dunlun T1828.621c02-05; also e.g. T1828.371c05-13; Chengguan, T1736.465c22-24; Yijing/Huizhao, 下別釋緣起, T1788.328a20ff, etc. As these latter two sets of alternate terms show, if we do not insist too pedantically upon reflecting the literal terms, it is therefore possible to think of these two opposing kinds of *karma* as "generic *karma*" or "*karma* of species" and "specific *karma*", respectively.

[1904] *Vipākaphala* ~果 is opposed to *niṣyandaphala* 異熟果, a "homogeneous effect" or an effect of a cause homogeneous to itself. Elsewhere in both JñP and *Vibh*, *vaipākika* is defined (from the side of cause, *hetu*) in terms immediately relevant for the present passage. The relevant JñP passage is at T1544.920c27-921a10, to which it will suffice to cite the first portion and *Vibh* explanation:

> "[JñP:] 'What is heterogeneous cause? It refers to what happens when mind and *dharmas* associated with mind (*citta, caitāsikadharma*) undergo (受) [the effects of] physical form (*rūpa*), mind, *dharmas* associated with mind, or *dharmas* dissociated from mind (*cittaviprayuktadharma*) heterogeneous to themselves, such that the mind or *dharmas* associated with mind are effects heterogeneous to those [*rūpa, citta, caitāsika, cittaviprayukta*], [and takes them] for their heterogeneous causes.'
>
> "[*Vibh*:] Here, 'mind and *dharmas* associated with mind' refers to all bad and good (不善善, i.e. excluding the category of the karmically neutral) mind and *dharmas* associated with mind; this term also includes the *rūpa* that comes into being in association with them (彼隨轉色, **tadanuvartakarūpa*) and the [*citta*-]*viprayukta,* because they constitute a single effect along with mind and *dharmas* associated with mind. Thus, visible form as an effect of a cause heterogeneous to itself (異熟色, **vipākarūpa*) refers to the eye and the other five organs (*pañcêndriya*), [and their objects, viz.] visible form, [sound,] scent, taste and tangibles; 'mind' refers to the aggregate of consciousness (*vijñānaskandha*), i.e. to the six consciousness of eye, etc.; [and] '*dharmas* associated with mind' refers to [the other] three aggregates (*skandha*), i.e. sensation (*vedanā*), conception (*saṃjñā*) and 思 (?, *sic*), etc. [*sic;* by my count we run out of *skandhas*!]; and '[*dharmas*] dissociated from mind' (*cittaviprayukta*) refers to the aggregate of karmic intention (*saṃskāraskandha*), i.e. the faculty of life[-force] (*jīvitêndriya*), the mutual identity of sentient beings (*sattvasabhāga*), etc. Thus, it is apparent that heterogeneous cause and heterogeneous effect (*vipākahetu, ~phala*) are both coterminous with the five aggregates (*skandhas*);" T1545.96b12-21.

The implication for our present passage seems to be that *jīvitêndriya* alone is purely *vaipākika,* even though, as we see above, *vaipākika* karmic causation is a very broad category, by means of which all five *skandhas* are brought into existence; presumably, therefore, there is something special about *vaipākika*-

<3> Because what is referred to here as **'the gross elements'** is the [ultimate] support (所依),[1906] it is mentioned first. **'Physical form comprised of the gross elements'** arises on its basis. On the basis of the physical form so comprised[, in turn], mind and *dharmas* associated with mind arise.[1907] [However,] because mind is the main focus, the text here speaks only in terms of the partial [designation] **'physical form comprised of the four elements'**, in order to indicate the body of physical form (*rūpakāya*) in general, and of **'the mental series based upon the body of the five senses'** in order to indicate mind and *dharmas* associated with mind; alongside these, there also still exist the [the other] *dharmas* dissociated from mind, such as birth (生), etc.,[1908] [but] because these points are abstruse (難了知), and because they are included in the *dharmas* already previously listed, they are not indicated or mentioned separately. Thus, **the eternal cessation of the fetters** attained by one in whom the series of these various *dharmas* have not ceased **is called 'the *nirvāṇadhātu* with a remainder of support'**.[1909]

<4> "There are also those who propound the following interpretation: **'material form comprised of the gross elements'** is the body, **'the five sense-organs'** are the sense-organs, and **'the series of mind'** (*cittasaṃtāna*) is 'mind' (覺, **bodhi*). **The eternal cessation of the fetters** where these series of body, organs and mind **have not been severed**[1910] **is called 'the *nirvāṇadhātu* with a remainder of support'.** As it says in the

causation that makes it the real reason that the person of the Arhat, comprising all five *skandhas,* continues to exist. Bearing in mind the fact that the Arhat is one in whom, by definition, the "outflows" *āsrava* have ceased, might we suppose that the point is therefore that it is only in virtue of heterogeneous causation that the impure five *skandhas* can continue to exist for such a person?

[1905] The entirety of this paragraph is absent in Buddhavarman/Daotai.

[1906] We might note the way this reading of *upadhi* as "support", meaning the body of the five *skandhas,* begins here to dovetail with the meaning of *āśraya,* also translated *yi* 依, as it was eventually to work out in the later theory of *āśrayaparāvṛtti.*

[1907] This definition of the "support" and what is "supported by it" (所依, *能依) recalls the definition of *āśraya* and *āśrita* at AKBh to 3.41 (see below, n. 2491) and thus promises to serve as a link between the notion of "remainder" (*upadhi,* 餘依) and "support" (依), and thereby perhaps between *sôpadhiśeṣa-* and *nirupadhiśeṣanirvāṇadhātu* and *āśrayaparāvṛtti.* We will return to this possible link in Chapter 5.2 below; see also p. 1148 below.

[1908] "Birth" is not among the list of *cittaviprayuktadharmāḥ* in Saṃghabhadra's list, as studied by Cox. It appears that *Vibh* assumes a different set of *cittaviprayuktadharmāḥ,* viz., in addition to *jīvitêndriya* and *sattvasabhāga,* "possession" (*prāpti*), birth, old age, subdurance, and impermanence (得生老住無常); see T1545.a28-b01, 100b17, 100c03-04.

[1909] This paragraph is paralleled in Buddhavarman/Daotai only by a much simpler discussion, which, however, is basically the same in its rudiments. It reads: "Here, 'the four gross [elements] means the four gross elements. 'The sense-organs' means the material form (*rūpa*) comprised [by those elements]. 'The series of mind' means mind and *dharmas* associated with mind. This is [what is meant by] 'the *nirvāṇadhātu* with a vestigial body';" T1546.126a23-25.

[1910] Following an obvious repunctuation of the Taishō thus (my punctuation in square brackets, original Taishō in round brackets): 大種造色是身[。]五根(。)是根[。]心相續是覺[。]此身根覺相續未斷 . . . .

sūtras, '"*Nirvāṇa* with a remainder of support refers to [a state in which] body, sense-organs, and mind have not yet ceased'.

<5> "Now, [JñP] says, '[mind still functions] **because there is a remainder of support'**. There are two kinds of **'support'**:[1911] (1) the support comprised by the *kleśas* (**kleśôpadhi*); and (2) the support comprised by the body of birth (**sambhavakāyôpadhi*).[1912] Thus, although the Arhat in the case discussed here is without the base comprised by the *kleśas,* he nonetheless does [still] have the base comprised by the body of birth. Or again, support is of two other kinds: (1) the defiled support (染污依), and (2) the undefiled support. The Arhat in the case discussed here is without the defiled support, but nonetheless does still have the undefiled support.[1913] Therefore, **the eternal cessation of the fetters** attained in such a case **is called 'the *nirvāṇadhātu* with a remainder of support'**.

<6> "[As for] '**apprehension (得獲, **pratyanubhāvanā*) and experience (觸證, **pratisaṃveda*)'**: although these words differ, they both indicate the same meaning.[1914]

"[JñP:] What, then, is the *nirvāṇadhātu* without a remainder of support? It is [the state of] the Arhat, in whom taints (諸漏, *āsrava*) are eternally exhausted, [when] life is extinguished, and the series of physical form constituted by the gross elements has been severed, such that the mind does not function any longer on the basis of the body of the five senses, because there is no remaining support. This eternal cessation of the fetters is called 'the *nirvāṇadhātu* with a remainder of support' (*nirupadhiśeṣanirvāṇadhātu*).

<7> "[*Vibh:*] Here, **'life is extinguished'** indicates that the faculty of life[-force] (*jīvitêndriya*) and the mutual identity of sentient beings (*sattvasabhāgatā*) are extinguished. These are both effects of the *karma* that determines existence *per se* (*ākṣepakarma*);[1915] although the text here happens to bring up explicitly only the faculty of life-force, it should be understood that it also refers to the mutual identity of sentient beings.[1916]

<8> **'The series of physical form constituted by the gross elements has been severed'** indicates that the series of the *rūpakāya*[1917] in general has been severed. **'The mind does**

[1911] In keeping with its translation in terms of *nirvāṇadhātu* with/out a vestigial *body,* Buddhavarman/Daotai here reads, "There are two kinds of body" etc., T1546.126a28-29.

[1912] Buddhavarman/Daotai here has only "the body of birth".

[1913] Basically the same in Buddhavarman/Daotai; T1546.126a28-b02.

[1914] This paragraph is absent in Buddhavarman/Daotai.

[1915] See above n. 1903.

[1916] This paragraph is absent in Buddhavarman/Daotai.

[1917] The term *rūpakāya* does not occur in Buddhavarman/Daotai.

not function any longer on the basis of the body of the five senses' indicates that the mind and *dharmas* associated with mind do not continue [in series] any longer.[1918] The significance of the fact that the text does not speak of birth, etc. is as above.[1919] "There are also those who propound the following interpretation: 'physical matter comprised of the gross elements' indicates the body; 'the body of the five sense-organs' indicates the sense-organs; 'the series of mind' indicates mind (覺, **bodhi*).

<9> "A case where (a) (i)the *rūpakāya,*[1920] (ii) mind and (iii)*dharmas* associated with mind, or (或?) (b) the series of (i) body, (ii) sense-organs and (iii) and mind thus **having been severed, the fetters cease eternally, is called 'the *nirvāṇadhātu* without a remaining support'**.[1921] This means that when the Arhat is about to [enter] *parinirvāṇa,* [a] 'wind' arises in the body, and throws it out of kilter (不調適); because it is out of kilter, the inner fire grows weak; because the inner fire is weak, food is not digested; because food is not digested, he has no appetite; because he has no appetite, he no longer eats or drinks; because he does not eat or drink, the gross elements deteriorate; because the gross [elements] wane, the sense-organs of physical form comprised [of the elements] also deteriorate with them; because the sense-organs deteriorate, mind and *dharmas* associated with mind, having no support, do not continue [in series, 相續[1922]] any longer; because mind and *dharmas* associated with mind do not continue [in series], the faculty of life[-force], etc. is severed; and because the faculty of life[-force] etc. is severed, it is called 'entering ***nirvāṇa***'.[1923]

[1918] Or "that there is no longer a series of mind and *dharmas* associated with mind", though strictly speaking, *xiangxu* is here clearly being used as a verb, 心心所不復相續,a fact which I have reflected in my translation. This paragraph to this point differs significantly in Buddhavarman/Daotai, in ways that parallel the discrepancy already noted above for para <3>, n. 1909. It reads: : "Here, 'the four gross [elements] means the four gross elements. 'The sense-organs' means the material form (*rūpa*) comprised [by those elements]. 'The series of mind' means mind and *dharmas* associated with mind. This is [what is meant by] 'the *nirvāṇadhātu* without a vestigial body';", T1546.126b06-09.

[1919] This sentence is absent in Buddhavarman/Daotai.

[1920] Note that, given that this entire paragraph is absent in Buddhavarman/Daotai, this instance of *rūpakāya,* also, is absent there; see also 1917. This means the term is entirely absent from that version of this passage as a whole.

[1921] The introduction to this paragraph differs fundamentally in Buddhavarman/Daotai: "This portion of the text should not propound the theory that it is 'the *nirvāṇadhātu* without any vestigial body' when the body, sense-organs and mind are extinguished. Rather, it should explain that it is called 'the *nirvāṇadhātu* without any vestigial body' when an Arhat who has completely severed all fetters enters into *nirvāṇa*. What is the meaning of the fact that it nonetheless does not give this explanation? Because that elder is explaining in accordance with ordinary worldly discourse, and because of faith in the scriptures;" T1546.126, b11-15. Note that this sentence partially echoes the second half of the introduction to para <13> in Xuanzang below, but in Buddhavarman/Saṃghabhūti the order of these textual elements, and therefore their relation, is different.

[1922] Once more, *xiangxu* is used as a verb; see n. 1922.

[1923] From this point, Buddhavarman/Daotai begins to agree more closely with the Xuanzang, but still with variation: "When an Arhat dies, the gross element of wind harms the gross element of fire, and the gross element of fire being harmed, food and drink are not digested; because food and drink are not digested, the four gross elements weaken; because the four gross elements weaken, the sense-organs also

<10> "When the text says **'because there is no remaining support'**, [it means] that two kinds of support do not exist: (1) there is no support comprised of *kleśas;* (2) there is no support comprised by the body of birth. Or, also, that (1) there is no defiled support; and (2) there is no undefiled support. **Because there is no remaining support** [in these senses], **the eternal cessation of the fetters is called 'the *nirvāṇadhātu* with no remainder of support'.**[1924]

<11> "Why do the words **'apprehension and experience'** not occur here? Because it is only in the basis of present apprehension that we can speak of 'apprehension' etc. But [in this case] present apprehension is severed, and so we do not speak of it. Also, because it is [only as] a conventional designation (施設, **prajñapti*) based upon the person (補特伽羅, *pudgala*) that [there is] **'apprehension and experience'**. But in this case, there is no *pudgala,* only the true nature of *dharmas* (*dharmatā*); for this reason, [also,] we do not speak [of 'apprehension and experience'].[1925]

<12> "Is it really true (頗 . . . . 耶) that there are Arhats who dwell neither in the *nirvāṇadhātu* with a remainder of support nor the *nirvāṇadhātu* without a remainder of support? Although there are in truth (理) no such cases, there would indeed be such cases according to what is said here. For according to what is said here, each of the three criteria must be met in order for us to speak of the *nirvāṇadhātu* with a remainder of support; and only where all three criteria are absent can we speak of the *nirvāṇadhātu* without a remainder of support. [Thus,] an Arhat born into the formless realm(無色界, *ārūpyadhātu*) has an immaterial body (or perhaps 'does not have a *rūpakāya*', 無色身, **arūpyakāya*?),[1926] and therefore does not dwell in the *nirvāṇadhātu* with a remainder of support; [and yet] his mind does function, and therefore he does not dwell in the *nirvāṇadhātu* without a remainder of support. [Again,] if an Arhat born into the *rūpadhātu* enters into the 'absorption of complete cessation' (滅盡定, *nirodhasamāpatti*), he does not dwell in the *nirvāṇadhātu* with a remainder of support, because his mind has ceased to function, but neither does he dwell in the *nirvāṇadhātu*

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deteriorate; because the sense-organs deteriorate, they cannot act as support for mind and *dharmas* associated with mind; because mind and *dharmas* associated with mind find no support, then mind and *dharmas* associated with mind no longer arise; and the state in which they no longer arise is 'the *nirvāṇadhātu* without a vestigial body;" T1546.126b15-19. In sum, this explanation is slightly simpler, and is missing (as is the rest of the paragraph) discussion of the "life-force" (*jīvitêndriya*) and also does not mention appetite and failing to eat or drink.

[1924] Basically the same in Buddhavarman/Daotai: T1546.126b19-23.

[1925] Basically the same in Buddhavarman/Daotai, T1546.126b23-28.

[1926] On the usual preconceptions about *rūpakāya* and the way it sits in the range of overall possibilities of embodiment, 無色身 would most instinctively be read "do not have a *rūpakāya*. However, as we have already seen above (see n. 1822), there are passages elsewhere in the text where it clearly speaks of *wuseshen* = **arūpyakāya* as a positive form of embodiment available to sentient beings in the *arūpyadhātu,* and it seems to me that this is what is most likely being implied here – not merely that these beings do not have a *rūpakāya,* though that of course is also true, but that they have the kind of body appropriate to the *arūpyadhātu.*

without a remainder of support, since he still has a *rūpakāya*. Finally, if an Arhat is born into the *karmadhātu* with incomplete sense-organs(不具根), then, because he does not have all five sense-organs, he does not dwell in the *nirvāṇadhātu* with a remainder of support, and yet, because he still has a *rūpakāya*, he does not dwell in the *nirvāṇadhātu* without a remainder of support.[1927]

<13> "Some say, therefore, that the text here ought to say, 'What is the *nirvāṇadhātu* with a remainder of support? It refers to a case where an Arhat still has life, [where] all the fetters have eternally ceased, [and where there is] apprehension and experience. What is the *nirvāṇadhātu* without a remainder of support? It is the eternal cessation of the fetters in an Arhat whose life is extinguished.'[1928] If we were to adopt this interpretation, then Arhats of the three realms (*kāma-, rūpa-* and *ārūpyadhātu*), regardless of whether they have bodies of material form (*rūpakāya*) or they have an immaterial body; regardless of whether they have mental function, or do not have mental function; regardless of whether they have all five organs, or whether they do not have all five organs – just so long as they have life, they would all be said to dwell in the *nirvāṇadhātu* without a remainder of support; and when their life is extinguished, they would all be said to dwell in the *nirvāṇadhātu* without a remainder of support.[1929] That he should propose this interpretation and nevertheless does not do so, is because the author of the original treatise wished to favour his throng of disciples and make it easy for them to understand, for which reason he [rather] advanced the interpretation we see here."[1930]

This complex passage contains much of interest for our present discussion.

First, as I mentioned above, it speaks of the *rūpakāya* and the "body of birth" in the same sense and context,[1931] and thus might be interpreted as lending limited support to the notion that the Buddha, of whom the birth body is clearly predicated repeatedly, also has a *rūpakāya*. While the present passage does not specifically mention the Buddha (a point the significance of which I shall return to shortly), it is the *only* evidence in the text that the Buddha indeed has a *rūpakāya*,

[1927] This paragraph is basically the same in Buddhavarman/Daotai; T1546.126c05-11.

[1928] The last two sentences here are echoed in Buddhavarman/Daotai by the passage already cited above n. 1921, but in relation to a different part of the passage overall.

[1929] The remainder of this paragraph is missing in Buddhavarman/Daotai. The paragraph to this point is paralleled, with some inconsequential discrepancies in wording, at T1546.126c11-16.

[1930] For the entire passage translated here from Xuanzang, see T1545.167b14-168 b20.

[1931] Compare esp. *rūpakāya* in para. <2> and "body of birth" in para. <5>, or *rūpakāya* in para. <9> and "body of birth" in para. <10>. Note, however, that *rūpakāya* only occurs in this Xuanzang version of the text, and not in Buddhavarman/Daotai; the whole passage, of course, is absent in Saṃghabhūti's translation.

except for the passage already examined above asking whether it is possible to engage in the contemplation of impurity taking the *rūpakāya* of the Buddha as object. For that reason, we might have expected previous studies to pay more attention to it than they in fact have.

However, when we look closely at exactly what is said under the head of *rūpakāya* and "body of birth" respectively in this passage, we see that in fact, rather than lending support to the spurious claim that *Vibh* predicates a *rūpakāya* as one of the kinds of body the Buddha has, its implications are quite different.

First, it is clear that in fact, where both terms are used, they refer to a kind of embodiment which, once more, insofar as it is possessed by the Buddha, is shared by him as common property with other kinds of beings, and is no unique property. In this case, of course, the beings with whom he shares this body are Arhats, and thus quite high on the scale of spiritual accomplishment.

This means that the "body of birth", equally, is not entirely a unique property of the Buddha, and to that degree, we might want to nuance the claim that the "body of birth", also, is a special body of the Buddha.[1932] It is a special body which is possessed by the Buddha in common with other special beings, that is to say, but it is not a special body as the *dharmakāya* is a special body (see below), that is, in the sense that it is possessed only by a Buddha, and its possession marks the being that possessed it as such.

[1932] We did encounter one other passage above, in the course of our study of the notion of *shengshen,* that spoke of a "body of birth" in the case of beings other than the Buddha; but in that case the term was applied to the *bodhisattva* (see passage cited n. 1863), thus strengthening the general impression that even if the term is not restricted to Buddhas alone, it is applied specifically to beings like Arhats, *bodhisattvas* and Buddhas who have realised (or will realise?) full awakening.

Second, with regard to the *rūpakāya* in particular, it is especially evident from the very careful technical treatment given in this passage that, as we already noted above, it refers primarily to a body of physical form (*rūpa*) as the property of sentient beings in the realms of desire (*kāmadhātu*) or form (*rūpadhātu*), in contrast to the kinds of bodies possessed by bodies in the realm of formlessness/the immaterial realm (*ārūpyadhātu*). In other words, *rūpa-* in *rūpakāya* is not understood in opposition to *dharma,* as if "matter" to "spirit" or some such, but in opposition to *arūpya,* where what is at stake is the level of grossness or subtlety in the physical itself. The present passage confirms, therefore, that we must reorient our understanding of *rūpakāya* in this text from a mistaken frame of Buddhalogical questions, to a frame of ordinary cosmology which does not necessarily have anything to do with soteriology or spiritually realised beings at all.

The present passage is also noteworthy for the fact that it uses the term "body of birth" with reference, in principle, to any Arhat, and not just to the Buddha. It is, first, significant that where we encounter the extension of the concept of "body of birth" beyond the Buddha himself, to whom as we saw above it most typically is applied, it is extended to a class of beings who share with him many of the key features of his buddhahood, and in particular, his liberation from the *kleśas* and associated elements of suffering. It seems that this extension, then, if anything confirms that the term "body of birth" is used most particularly to refer to the ordinary physical body *in the special situation where it is possessed by a perfected being.*

That this is the sense of "body of birth" is further confirmed by close examination of the way the present passage alternates between *rūpakāya* and "body of birth". The text uses the term *rūpakāya* in all cases where it is describing the ordinary Abhidharmic analysis of the relationship between body as "support" and the operation of mind and associated *dharmas*

(para <2>); or where it is discussing the physical body as it does not pertain to the Arhat, as something that has ceased in the case of the Arhat who has entered into the *nirupadhiśeṣanirvāṇadhātu* (paras <7>, <9>). By contrast, when the text discusses the physical body as it still does persist for some Arhats, it uses the term "body of birth" (opposing it to the *kleśas,* as a second kind of support that never remains in the Arhat) (paras <5>, <10>). The only case where the text uses the term *rūpakāya* to refer specifically to the body as it persists in an Arhat, therefore, is in the discussion of cases anomalous on the definition of the root text (para <12>), where what is at stake is precisely the technical distinction between kinds of body that obtain in different dimensions of the overall cosmology. In other words, the overall distribution of the two terms further supports the understanding that "body of birth" is a term applied in the special case where a physical body endures for a being who has already attained *nirvāṇa* – which understanding, of course, would make it equally applicable to the Buddha.

If this is indeed the systematic distinction in terms of which we should understand the difference between the terms *rūpakāya* and "body of birth", which, after all, ultimately apply to roughly the same kind of body, the fact adds an important dimension to our understanding of the term "body of birth", and we might be able to specify that "body of birth" refers to the body of the Buddha insofar as it is the physical body of an Arhat, that is, the lingering physical body possessed by a being who has already attained *nirvāṇa.*

However, things are, in fact, not this simple. First, we have already seen above that the term "body of birth" is clearly applied to the body of the Buddha *before* his awakening, i.e. before he attains to any kind of "*nirvāṇa*" at all, in the passage that urges the outward forms of the monastic life as the cultivation or imitation of the Buddha's body of birth.[1933] This would

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[1933] See §4.4.4, p. 860 above.

directly contradict the notion that the "body of birth" is properly spoken of only in the case where the physical body lingers for a being who has already attained the *sôpadhiśeṣanirvāṇadhātu,* whether that body belongs to the Buddha or to another Arhat. Second, we have also seen that the text also posits certain remarkable properties of the Buddha's body of birth, such as Nārāyaṇa strength and the power to visit the Brahmā world even without the elaboration of a *manomayakāya*. In these cases, it is hard to imagine that these powers would also characterise the "body of birth" of any other Arhat, and indeed, in the case of the power to visit the Brahmā world, the Buddha states he has this power in his "body of birth" in specific response to a request from Ānanda to tell him about something he can do that no Śrāvaka can do.

These difficulties may mean that *Vibh* is not entirely univocal in its reading of the concept of the "body of birth", and if this is true, it should not surprise us – first, because *Vibh* is a debate text, which records the multiple positions that animated controversy, so that the very notion of "the" *Vibh* position on a certain question may not always be most apposite; and second, because it could well be true, as we have already observed, that the text accreted over a long period of time, in which case it is neither the product of a single authorial voice or hand, nor the reflection of a single doctrinal and historical *milieu*.

To the extent that we might be justified in seeking an interpretation that can make consistent sense of these various ideas about the "body of birth", however, we are led to conclude that there are at least two respects in which we should qualify the statement that the "body of birth" is a special body of the Buddha, and therefore, stop short of replacing the old "two-body" theory of *Vibh's* Buddha as embodied in *rūpakāya* and *dharmakāya* with an updated version in which we merely substitute the "body of birth" for the *dharmakāya*. As we already noted, it is

clear that even the "body of birth" is not unique to the Buddha, on the one hand, but that his particular "body of birth" has many unique properties, on the other. This in turn suggests strongly that we are not yet at a point where the Buddha's "other body" (or bodies) is part of any coherent theory at all (despite the outright statement of the text that "the Buddha's bodies are in general of two kinds"), but rather, that we still witness here a stage at which the physical body of the Buddha is understood as having special features but still, at base, a kind of body that he shares in common with other beings.

This does not exhaust the implications of this extended passage, however. It is also thought-provoking for the remarkable picture it gives us of the state of doctrine about *sôpadhiśeṣa-* and *nirupadhiśeṣanirvāṇadhātu* in the Sarvâstivāda as represented by JñP and *Vibh,* and shows us, via the term "body of birth", that the idea of *sôpadhiśeṣanirvāṇadhātu* was already entering into the orbit of ideas about the bodies of the Buddha.

Recall that when we surveyed the Chinese canon for evidence of the "corporeal" reading of these concepts in the Appendix to Chapter 3, we found a surprising paucity of such passages down to 400 C.E. At that time, however, I deliberately bracketed out the Sarvâstivāda materials for discussion here, in their proper context, and this was because they constitute such a surprising exception to that overall pattern. Bearing in mind that if the traditional association of *Vibh* with Kaniṣka is anything to go by, it and JñP, upon which it comments, should witness Sarvâstivāda Abhidharma doctrinal evolution sometime around the first or second century of the Common Era, it is simply remarkable to see not just that the corporeal reading of these concepts is so firmly established, but that it is developed and disputed to such a high degree of detail and sophistication.

We already see this in the passage above, where we are treated not just to clear evidence of the corporeal interpretation of the opposition between *sôpadhiśeṣa-* and *nirupadhiśeṣanirvāṇadhātu,* but to a detailed exposition of the precise workings of the state of *sôpadhiśeṣa~* (paras <2>, <3>, <5>) and to accounts of opposing or alternate points of view on the same doctrine (para <4>, revisited in para <8>), and a detailed explanation of the precise process by which an Arhat transitions from *sôpadhiśeṣa~* to *nirupadhiśeṣa~,* i.e. what it means to "die" when that death constitutes entry into *parinirvāṇa*.

Even this is not all, however.[1934] In a part of the passage I omitted above, in order to focus attention on the already complex relation between *sôpadhiśeṣanirvāṇadhātu* and the "body of birth"/*rūpakāya*, *Vibh,* in discussing the reasons that JñP engages this topic of dispute, adds that the author wished to refute a range of incorrect interpretations of the *sôpadhiśeṣa-/nirupadhiśeṣa-* distinction and its implications. The range of opinion he cites is simply astonishing:

> "[The root text] also engages in this disputation to counter other schools, and demonstrate the correct interpretation.[1935] Thus, there are those who insist that *nirvāṇadhātu* with a remainder of support is an essential entity (lit. "has own-nature", 自性), whereas the *nirvāṇa* without a remainder of support is not an essential entity;[1936] [so the root text engages in this disputation] to refute this dogma, and to demonstrate that both kinds of *nirvāṇadhātu* alike are not essential entities. Again, there are those who insist that the *nirvāṇadhātu* with a remainder of support is tainted (*sâsrava* 有漏, lit.

[1934] In addition to the passage cited here, note also: (1) the brief mention of *sôpadhiśeṣanirvāṇadhātu* alone in the metaphorical passage cited below n. 2066; (2) one other mention of *sôpadhiśeṣa-* and *nirupadhiśeṣanirvāṇadhātu* in JñP, at T1544.1031c02-10, where the interpretation is also rather in terms of the older distinctions between those still bound by the five "higher fetters" and those not so bound, that is, where the interpretation is *not* in terms of the "corporeal" reading. It seems that *Vibh* does not comment on this passage.

[1935] On this formula, and the listing of "faulty theories of other schools or masters" so introduced, as a feature of the style of the *vibhāṣā* compendia, see Willemen, Dessein and Cox 237; they refer further to Hirose Tomoichi 広瀬智一, "Abidaruma ni okeru haja no keitai"アビダルマにおける破邪の形態, *Nippon bukkyō gakkai nenpō* 日本仏教学会年報 48 (1983), 87-102 (the date of this article is given in error as 1993 in their bibliography, 299).

[1936] Cf. Buddhavarman/Daotai 有體/無體, T1546.126a13-14.

'has outflow'), whereas the *nirvāṇadhātu* without a remainder of support is taintless (*anāsrava* 無漏, 'is without outflow');[1937] [so the root text engages in this disputation] in order to refute this dogma, and to demonstrate that both kinds of *nirvāṇadhātu* alike are taintless. Others there are again who insist that the *nirvāṇadhātu* with a remainder of support is conditioned (有爲 *saṃskṛta*), and the *nirvāṇadhātu* without a remainder of support is unconditioned (無爲, *asaṃskṛta*);[1938] [so the root text engages in this disputation] to refute this dogma, and to demonstrate that both kinds of *nirvāṇadhātu* alike are unconditioned. Others there are again who insist that the *nirvāṇadhātu* with a remainder of support is (karmically) good (善, *kuśala*), and the *nirvāṇadhātu* without a remainder of support is (karmically) neutral (無記, *avyākṛta*); [so the root text engages in this disputation] to refute this dogma, and to demonstrate that both kinds of *nirvāṇadhātu* alike are good. Or, again, there are others who insist that the *nirvāṇadhātu* with a remainder of support is of the path (道, *mārga*) but is not the fruit of the path (道果, *mārghaphala*), while the *nirvāṇadhātu* without a remainder of support is the fruit of the path but not of the path ; [so the root text engages in this disputation] to refute this dogma, and to demonstrate that both kinds of *nirvāṇadhātu* alike are the fruit of the path. Still others insist that the *nirvāṇadhātu* with a remainder of support is included in the [four noble] truths (諦攝), while the *nirvāṇadhātu* without a remainder of support is not included in the truths; [so the root text engages in this disputation] to refute this dogma, and to demonstrate that both kinds of *nirvāṇadhātu* alike are included in the truths. Still others insist that the *nirvāṇadhātu* with a remainder of support is of the stage beyond training (無學, *aśaikṣa*), whereas the *nirvāṇadhātu* without a remainder of support is neither of the stage of training nor of the stage beyond training (非學非無學); [so the root text engages in this disputation] to refute this dogma, and to demonstrate that that both kinds of *nirvāṇdhātu* alike are neither of the stage of training nor of the stage beyond training. It is for the various reasons laid out here that the root text engages in this disputation."[1939]

It would take us too far beyond our present purposes to examine these questions in detail. It is nonetheless noteworthy that this is not mere conjecture on the part of the *Vibh* authors. The matter of whether or not *nirvāṇa* of the two kinds is *śaikṣa* or *aśaikṣa,* at least, is the topic of discussion in an extended portion of the text following the portion translated here, not only in *Vibh* but in JñP itself.[1940]

[1937] This topic of dispute is absent in the earlier Buddhavarman/Daotai translation.

[1938] This topic of dispute is absent in the earlier Buddhavarman/Daotai translation.

[1939] T1545.167b23-c13. This passage is present in its essentials, with the exception of the absence of two topics of dispute, in Buddhavarman/Daotai, T1546.126a10-22.

[1940] Beginning (in *Vibh*) at T1545.168c26 ff., and in JñP at T1544.923b19-924a07.

Further, this is not the only place in *Vibh* that assumes the corporeal interpretation of *sôpadhiśeṣa-* and *nirupadhiśeṣanirvāṇadhātu* and weaves them into complex discussions of other technical categories. Another extended passage, for instance, considers a range of meditative and other spiritual accomplishments against a set of labels including cessation (*nirodha*), truth (*satya*), omniscience (*sarvajñatā*), and "the fruits of monastic practice" (*śrāmaṇyaphala*), and the apparent pinnacle of this gradated set of criteria are *sôpadhiśeṣa-* and *nirupadhiśeṣanirvāṇadhātu.* It is clear, moreover, that the operative interpretation of these terms is the "corporeal": *nirupadhiśeṣanirvāṇadhātu* is defined as ensuing upon the "cessation of the *skandhas, āyatanas* and *dhātus* of the Arhat, such that they thereafter continue no more" (阿羅漢蘊界處滅。後更不續).[1941]

We must also bear in mind, in considering the implications of this passage for the questions of the provenance and dating of the "corporeal" model of *sôpadhiśeṣa-* and *nirupadhiśeṣanirvāṇadhātu,* that as we saw above, the bulk of this passage is already found in the Buddhavarman translation of 437, with the significant exceptions of the translation of "with remainder of support" by "with a vestigial body"; omission of the term *rūpakāya* itself; the omission of the very technical discussion of "life-force" (*jīvitêndriya*) and "mutual identify [of sentient beings]" (*sattvasabhāgatā*); and some aspects of the order of presentation of the ideas.[1942] This means that most of the complexity and detail in this passage cannot date much later than the turn of the fifth century C.E. at the latest.

[1941] T1545.321b07-322b09. Note that the corporeal reading does not have a monopoly in the text, however; another discussion at T1545.874b21-875c01 uses the terms in the context of an exposition of the five kinds of Non-Returner (see above p. 396, 397, n. 844) and thus assumes the non-corporeal reading.

[1942] Most of this discussion was pursued in the footnotes to my translation of the Xuanzang version. For a list of footnotes which note discrepancies between the two versions, see n. 2101 below.

On face value, then, the text as it is traditionally dated would compel us to believe that at a phase in doctrinal history subsequent to which it is difficult to find much evidence at all of the corporeal reading of the opposition between *sôpadhiśeṣa-* and *nirupadhiśeṣa-* in the Chinese translation record, the Vaibhāṣika masters and their interlocutors were engaging in a whole range of extraordinarily subtle and vigorous disputes about its minutiae and ramifications.

I think that we have only two choices in interpreting the historical significance of this material.

If, on the one hand, the material common to Buddhavarman and Xuanzang translations of *Vibh* (and in part, let us remember, both versions of JñP) somehow indeed represents the state of Sarvâstivāda Abhidharma around the time of Kaniṣka, as the traditional account of the authorship of these texts would have us believe, then surely the fact that discussion of the opposition between *sôpadhiśeṣa-* and *nirupadhiśeṣanirvāṇadhātu,* on the new corporeal reading, is so sophisticated in these contexts so early must mean that the corporeal reading of the terms originates in or very close to the Sarvâstivāda Abhidharma.

On the other hand, we must also reckon with the possibility that the presence, in these texts, of such a detailed and sophisticated range of opinions, on concepts that our evidence would otherwise lead us to suggest only became prevalent somewhat later, indicates that the Chinese translations of the texts *do* in fact contain material developed later. This possibility would also be supported by the fact that there are some quite significant discrepancies between e.g. the Buddhavarman and Xuanzang versions of the passage presently under discussion, and more broadly, a more widespread pattern of numerous and frequent discrepancies between the doctrines of embodiments in the two texts at large.[1943] Finally, we will also see in Chapter 5.2

[1943] For further comparisons between the doctrines of embodiments in these two versions of the text, see below §4.4.11, p. 945 ff.

below that the "Nirvāṇa Chapter" of the *Viniścayasaṃgrahaṇī* of the *Yogācārabhūmi* also contains a passage which links this pair of concepts, in the corporeal reinterpretation, to the notion of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* ("revolution of the basis"), which I will argue in this dissertation is best understood in the context of ideas about embodiment, as itself a new idea about the corporeal conditions and concomitants of enlightenment that emerged around the fourth century. This connection, also, suggests that the extraordinary interest in these concepts here in *Vibh,* and the sophistication of the discussion, should lead us to locate this aspect of the text in roughly the same era.

This would mean, however, that these texts are therefore not a particularly reliable witness to Sarvâstivāda Abhidharma ideas in the early period to which belong the earliest Prajñāpāramitā texts and the Kharoṣṭhī relic inscriptions, in particular, among the other materials discussed in this dissertation. (If this were true, it might mean, incidentally, that discussion of these texts is entirely out of place in the present chapter.) It might also mean, more seriously, that even those conceptions of the Buddha's embodiments that we do find in the Sarvâstivāda Abhidharma do not fit into the overall narrative of the Buddha's embodiments in the fashion that the usual "1-2-3" "Nikāyas-Schools/Prajñāpāramitā-Yogācāra" narratives would lead us to expect. We will return to this possibility in the conclusion to this section of this dissertation.

To the extent that *Vibh* does, in fact, propound a "two-body" theory *of the Buddha,* then, we have seen that the operative opposition is between *dharmakāya* and "body of birth" or the "body born of father and mother", rather than the *rūpakāya* as has largely been suggested by previous scholarship. Before we turn to examine in its own right the conception of *dharmakāya* to which this "body of birth" is opposed in the text, we will therefore briefly summarise what we have

discovered about this "body of birth", not all of which fits simply into the moulds of previous stereotypes about Sarvâstivāda Abhidharma doctrines of the Buddha's bodies.

4.4.6 An overview of the "body of birth" in *Vibh*

Thus, to summarise the most significant ideas about the Buddha's "body of birth" or "body born of father and mother" found in Xuanzang's *Vibh*, we have seen:

> that the term is applied to the Buddha's last physical earthly body right through his lifetime, from his early years in which he was by definition still a *bodhisattva,* beyond his awakening under the *bodhi* tree, to the very scene of his *parinirvāṇa*;[1944] and further, that it is once even related to the Buddha's relics;
>
> in a related doctrine, that it is the body which is identified as the "remainder" in the corporeal interpretation of *sôpadhiśeṣanirvāṇadhātu*;
>
> that it is the object of offerings, and requires food and clothing;
>
> that it is immensely strong, but that its strength wanes with age;
>
> that it is the body referred to in the definition of the *anantarya* sin of drawing blood from the Buddha's body;

[1944] In my review of Guang Xing's *Concept of the Buddha,* I suggested that "to refer to a 'birth body' in contrast to a "dharma body" would seem. . . to resonate . . . with theories, found according to la Vallée Poussin in some Sarvâstivādin sources ["Appendice" 784], that upon his attainment of Nirvāṇa the Buddha either acquires another body (of *dharma*), alongside which the birth-body persists, or else whips away the birth-body and substitutes for it in the same instant a 'fictive' replica;" 59 n. 20. In light of these findings, I would now certainly discount my suggestion there that the "body of birth" ceases to exist for the Buddha at the moment of awakening, which was clearly wrong.

that it is impure (tainted/'with outflows', *sâsrava*);

that it is the "support" of the *dharmakāya,* and it is possible to harm the *dharmakāya* by harming it; and yet, at least insofar as it is considered as a body of the *bodhisattva,* it is puzzlingly "based upon" a set of "limitless merits" clearly identical with the *āveṇikadharmas,* and therefore, according to at least one definition, upon the *dharmakāya*;[1945]

that the part of the practice of a monk which consists in leaving the household, shaving the head and beard, donning monastic robes, and observing precepts is understood as the imitation of this body;

that the Buddha (alone) is miraculously capable of travelling even to the Brahmā Heaven in this body(!).

In closing, we might make two further general observations about this body.

It is clear that the "body of birth" is neither entirely mundane nor entirely transcendent, and that, as such, certain tensions exist within the understanding of this body, which tensions we might regard as potential motors to drive future further doctrinal innovation and speculation. On the one hand, this body is partially mundane. It is tainted or defiled; its strength, though immense, is nonetheless not yet infinite; it is heir to harms and ills; it is dependent upon conditions of sustenance etc. On the other hand, this body is also certainly no ordinary body. It exists in some ill-defined and yet special relation to the *dharmakāya*; it has extraordinary

[1945] See passage cited above n. 1863.

strength beyond any other physical body in the cosmos; it can somehow travel even to the Brahmā Heaven; as the object of offerings of goods to the Buddha (which cannot be offered to the *dharmakāya*), it is implicitly a great field of merit; and so on.

Finally, we should also observe that it is not clear, oddly enough, whether this "body of birth" is the body of marks.[1946] It would seem logical enough to assume that the body of marks is indeed to be identified with this body:[1947] in all other respects, when the Buddha's body is spoken of in its extraordinary qualities (cf. especially his superhuman strength), this is the body that is referred to, and it is even stated that the body of marks depends upon the Buddha's body in a context that clearly also states that the Buddha's body has innumerable merits, a description which is very close to that of the *dharmakāya;*[1948] if the body of birth is based upon the *dharmakāya,* and so is the body of marks, we might reasonably expect an identity between them.

4.4.7 Review of findings thus far about the *dharmakāya* in *Vibh*

We now turn to the concept of *dharmakāya* as it appears in *Vibh.* I will argue that the concept of *dharmakāya* is considerably more complex in this text than has been recognised by prior secondary scholarship. Most importantly, I will argue that previous scholars have overlooked the important fact that the understandings of *dharmakāya* operative in this text are bound together by a significant emphasis on the Buddha's embodiment in his gnosis, variously understood. This dimension of the concept of *dharmakāya* in the text obviously has broader resonances and implications, and in the conclusion to this section on Sarvâstivāda doctrines as

[1946] Note that this means that strictly speaking, in his Ch. 2 in *Concept of the Buddha,* Guang Xing is not only mistaken in speaking constantly of a **rūpakāya* where none of his textual passages actually have the term; but he is also mistaken in thinking that the body opposed to the *dharmakāya,* whatever name it is to be known by, is primarily understood as the body of marks.

[1947] Though see n. 1885 above for a case where these attributes are ascribed to the *dharma*[*tā*]*kāya* in MPPŚ.

[1948] See n. 1845.

a whole, I will argue that its presence in *Vibh* and related texts shows us that Sarvâstivāda understandings of the Buddha's embodiments had much in common with the other understandings examined in this chapter of this dissertation. These common understandings, however, drive in very different directions, and have very different implications, than we would expect from the larger generalisations about the "Mainstream" understanding found in the work of Paul Harrison on the *dharmakāya* in the period of the earliest Chinese Mahāyāna translations.

In the course of the analysis of other concepts of the Buddha's bodies above, we have already had cause to observe in passing a number of things the text proposes about the *dharmakāya.* Before we delve into fresh material in the text specifically about the *dharmakāya,* therefore, it will be useful to review what we already learnt above, this time foregrounding the pertinence of those passages for the text's doctrine of *dharmakāya.*

In some cases the *dharmakāya* is apparently referred to without the term as such being used. These passages suggest

> that it is the *dharmakāya-cum-āveṇikadharmas* (see below) that is the object of the ritual act of taking refuge in the Buddha;[1949]

> that the body of the *bodhisattva* (apparently also considered a "body of birth") is "based upon" the *dharmakāya*;[1950]

[1949] See passage cited at n 1844.

[1950] I.e. the body of the *bodhisattva* is based upon the ten powers, the four confidences etc., which, on the basis of passage we will examine immediately below, also should be interpreted as referring to the *dharmakāya;* see n. 1863.

> that if anything, the *dharmakāya* is the "body of the Buddha" upon which his *mahākaruṇā* is based, such that it is different from the compassion of adherents of the lesser two vehicles;[1951]

We also saw a rich collection of ideas about the *dharmakāya* presented throughout the passages on the "body of birth", which as we saw is very frequently discussed in connection with or opposition to the *dharmakāya.* Thus, we have seen

> that the *dharmakāya* is perfect and complete, and therefore the Buddha cannot receive offerings of *dharma*;

> that the *dharmakāya* never wanes or deteriorates, by contrast to the "body of birth", so that the "power" or strength of the *dharmakāya* (discussed under the head of "power of mind") also must not wane;

> that the sin of creating a schism in the *saṃgha* is greater than the sin of drawing blood from the Buddha's body, because, where the latter is an attack on his "body of birth", but breaking the *saṃgha* is an attack on the *dharmakāya* (this doctrine is once more of interest for the equation it posits between the *saṃgha* and a body of the Buddha);

> that the ear is considered by some authorities superior to other organs in "guiding the *dharmakāya*" (a doctrine which is of interest in part because of the otherwise *relatively unusual* implicit association it sets up, *pace* one dimension of Paul Harrison's

[1951] See passage already cited at 1845.

characterisation of the "Mainstream" *dharmakāya,* between the *dharmakāya* and the teaching);[1952]

that the Buddha as an object of the ritual act of taking refuge is to be understood as the *dharmakāya,* which is specifically glossed as "the *aśaikṣadharmāḥ* comprising *bodhi*" (a definition to which we will also return below);[1953]

that "modesty is the garb of the *dharmakāya*";[1954]

that where scripture says that the body of the Buddha is taintless ("without outflows", *anāsrava*), the text consistently interprets this statement as being made with reference to the *dharmakāya,* in contrast to which it insists upon the tainted and impure nature of the "body of birth" (also, in a similar context, called the *rūpakāya*);[1955]

that, in the context of a doctrine that interprets the pursuit of the monastic vocation and the Buddhist path in terms of "cultivation/study/imitation" of the Buddha's bodies, to engage in correct practice and give rise to perfect awakening with respect of the four noble truths is "to cultivate the *dharmakāya* of the Buddha";[1956]

1952 Sources for statements listed thus far are cited in fns. 1849 to 1855 above; see also the paragraph to which those notes are appended, p. 853.

1953 Passage cited n. 1871. This echoes but complicates the identification of the (partial) list of the *āveṇikadharmāḥ* (without naming them as such, or explicitly identifying them in this case as comprising the *dharmakāya*) already cited above n. 1949 etc. We will return to this point of definition below.

1954 See passage cited n. 1856.

1955 See passages cited fns. 1857 to 1861.

1956 See passage cited n. 1867.

This survey of the doctrines we have already observed in passing about the idea of the *dharmakāya* in *Vibh* is already ample to show that the usual accounts of that concept in the secondary literature are somewhat oversimplified. However, there are also one or two other rather anomalous passages in the text that discuss the *dharmakāya* and related concepts in their own right, and some dimensions of passages already mentioned that deserve further comment. In the remainder of this subsection, we will deal with a few miscellaneous passages, before turning to the two major interpretations of the *dharmakāya* as such proposed not only in *Vibh,* but in Sarvâstivāda Abhidharma more generally.

First, it is of interest, though puzzling, that where the text proposes that the *dharmakāya qua anuttarasaṃyaksaṃbodhi* is what one attacks when one splits the *saṃgha,*[1957] there is an implicit identification of the *dharmakāya* and the *saṃgha.* The understanding of the *saṃgha* as an embodiment of the Buddha seems to hover around the very fringes of Buddhist discourse about embodiment as a whole, as we have already observed on a number of other occasions;[1958] it is also an idea which, on the grounds of the comparison with the Christian Church as a body of Christ, we might expect to have tempted Buddhist thinkers. Nonetheless, as here, it seems always to remain at best something hinted at and undeveloped.

Discussion of the five *anantarya* sins is also the context in which we encounter other aspects of the doctrine of the *dharmakāya* in the text. For example, one passage asks why, if the Buddha is properly understood to be comprised of the *aśaikṣadharmas* (see below), it is such a grave sin to attack his body of birth; the *aśaikṣadharmas* presumably are not harmed by such an attack. The

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[1957] T1545.601c29-602a03, already cited above n. 1851.

[1958] See e.g. the (apparently late) Prajñāpāramitā notion of the *saṃghaśarīra,* discussed above p. 706; discussion of the potential in Pāli canonical passages about the "sons of the Buddha" pericope to be interpreted in terms of the Buddha's embodiment in the *saṃgha,* above p. 360.

text answers to this objection, in part, that "the *aśaikṣadharmas* that comprise the Buddha function (轉, */*vṛt*) based upon (依, **āśritya*) the body of birth. It should be understood that if one harms the basis (所依), one also harms what is based upon it (能依), just as, if the bottle is broken, the milk [in it] will also be lost."[1959] The interest for our purposes is that this passage begins to specify the relation between the "body of birth" and the *dharmakāya*: the body of birth is a support (*āśraya,* but perhaps also *upadhi*?), in terms that echo (in Chinese, at least) discourse about "the *nirvāṇadhātu* with a remainder of support" etc., already examined above.

These specifications about the relations raise interesting questions, which one suspects remain unconfronted in the text. If the body of birth is a necessary "support" for the *dharmakāya,* and the *dharmakāya* can be harmed by harm to the body of birth, what is the fate of the *dharmakāya* when the body of birth "breaks up" at the end of the Buddha's last physical earthly life? If the *dharmakāya* is so dependent upon or tied up with the fate of the body of birth, how can it also be claimed, elsewhere, that the *dharmakāya* does not wane in strength or deteriorate, even as the body of birth deteriorates with age?[1960] More generally, if the *dharmakāya* is dependent in this fashion upon the body of birth, how can it be said to be perfect, and how can it be adequate to the radical freedom of a Buddha?

We might also muse further about the fact that in the longest passage on the *āveṇikadharmas* (not so named), which occurs in the context of a discussion of the Buddha's strength or powers both physical and mental, this rubric, elsewhere associated with the *dharmakāya* (and here

[1959] T1545.620c09-18. Incidentally, the application of the "container-contained" metaphor to the two kinds of body threatens to make a nonsense of the claim sometimes advanced e.g. by Roger Ames that this understanding of embodiment is somehow specially "Western". See e.g. Ames's contributions to Kasulis, Ames and Dissanayake. See also in this connection the SN passage cited n. 1869.

[1960] See n. 1850.

implicitly associated with it too by the statement contrasting the decline of the Buddha's physical body with the claim that his *dharmakāya* does not wane or deteriorate with time), is discussed under the head of the Buddha's "powers (or 'strength') of mind". In combination with the passage we have just discussed, where the *dharmakāya* is said to be "based upon" the Buddha's body of birth, the impression conveyed is that the text assumes what we might call a "mentalistic" model of the *dharmakāya,* whereby the *dharmakāya* is, if anything, a kind of "mental body". (This would, of course, be in keeping with my central claim in this section as a whole that a neglected central thread emphasising the Buddha's embodiment in his gnosis runs through many of the Sarvâstivāda Abhidharma materials on the *dharmakāya,* in common with several other key conceptions of the embodiment of the Buddha in the broader Buddhist context; we will revisit this point below.)

In one curious passage, the possibility is envisaged that there might be a stage of realisation where the *kuśalamūla* are small, which is equated with a state in which the *dharmakāya* is "not yet grown" (法身未長). In this condition, it is not possible to sever the *kleśas,* but it is also said that the practitioner is not "overcome" (摧伏) by the *kleśas,* because the fledgling *dharmakāya* is still "powerful" (有威勢)*;* such a *dharmakāya* is compared to a tiger cub, who, not yet being fully grown, cannot catch other beasts, but is equally not harmed by other beasts, because it is powerful or awe-inspiring (有威勢).[1961] The interest of this passage is that it seems, somewhat anomalously, to suggest that a kind of nascent or embryonic *dharmakāya* might be possessed by a practitioner before they attain to the stage of buddhahood. In the (possibly anachronistic) perspective of our ordinary understanding of *dharmakāya,* this understanding would be freakish,

[1961] 問因論生論。世第一法。何故不能斷諸煩惱。答世第一法彼於爾時善根微小。法身未長而有威勢。以善根微小法身未長故不能斷惑。有威勢故不爲煩惱之所摧伏。如師子子身小未長而有威勢。以身小未長故不能害獸。有威勢故不爲諸獸之所侵害, T1545.15a28-b05. This passage is already found in Buddhavarman/Daotai, for which see below n. 2096.

or even make no sense. However, it is possible that it may interlock with other apparently anomalous passages we have observed in passing above. For example, if the body of the *bodhisattva* can be apparently based upon the *dharmakāya-cum-āveṇikadharmas,* perhaps this means that it is based upon such an embryonic *dharmakāya*-in-formation.[1962]

Similarly, we have already seen that in another curious passage, where the monastic vocation is urged in terms of the imitation of the Buddha's embodiments, the *dharmakāya* can be "cultivated", and that this cultivation specifically comprises "the cultivation of correct practice" and "giving rise to perfect awakening"[1963] Now, as we will see below, on the understanding usual in these texts, the moment at which perfect awakening arises is strictly coterminous with entry into the category of *aśaikṣa,* that is, those who require no more training. What can it mean, therefore, to say that the *dharmakāya* can be cultivated through correct practice, if not that the *dharmakāya* can be created in a nascent or incomplete form by those practices, and only eventually brought to full fruition or completion by the attainment of the crowning gnosis?

Such an understanding may also explain another otherwise puzzling and possibly anomalous passage, where, as the third of a series of glosses (apparently partly *nirukta*-style) on *upādāna,* we read,

> "*'Upādāna'* also means 'to harm' (傷害義). Just as, when one's body is repeatedly stabbed by sharp daggers, one's body will weaken and deteriorate, so too, where the *dharmakāya* of a sentient being (有情) is repeatedly stabbed by the daggers of the poisons and the *kleśas,* that *dharmakāya* will weaken and deteriorate (法身便壞)."[1964]

[1962] See passage cited n. 1863.

[1963] See passage cited n. 1867.

[1964] 復次傷害義是取義。如利毒刺數刺其身身便損壞。有情亦爾。煩惱毒刺數刺法身法身便壞」 (CBETA, T27, no. 1545, p. 247, c16-18). This passage is already present in Saṃghabhūti's earliest translation of the text, and also in Buddhavarman/Daotai; see below n. 2065.

This passage is so downright weird that we might almost wonder if we are reading the term 法身 correctly. What could it mean to say that the *dharmakāya* could "weaken and deteriorate", when we have seen elsewhere that, at least when it is predicated of the Buddha, it is said precisely that this cannot happen to it? And, in a related puzzle, what does it mean to attribute a *dharmakāya* to a "sentient being" (*youqing* 有情)? Once more, especially in conjunction with the passages cited above, it is difficult to avoid the impression that what is envisaged here is a kind of nascent or fledgling *dharmakāya,* not yet perfected, which might be gradually built by the practitioner over time.

Unfortunately, much as we might like to know more about this dimension of the text's understanding of *dharmakāya,* this is all the evidence I know of for it in the text, and there seems little point in further, perhaps baseless, speculation.[1965]

In the above survey of various ideas about the *dharmakāya,* I have deliberately left for special consideration passages relating to the two most significant technical interpretations of the notion of *dharmakāya* in the Sarvâstivāda Abhidharma, viz. its definition in relation to the eighteen *āveṇikadharmas,* and its definition in terms of the *aśaikṣadharmas* and the related rubric of the *anāsravaskandhas.* We now turn to the examination of these ideas.

4.4.8 The eighteen *āveṇikadharmas* and the *dharmakāya* in *Vibh*

The claim is sometimes seen in the secondary literature, and not entirely without justification, that the Sarvâstivāda define the *dharmakāya* as the eighteen *āveṇikadharmas* or "unique

[1965] A possibly related idea is the claim that it is the *dharmakāya* that is "sustained and nourished" by the "food" of the *dhyānas;* T1545.419b01-05. This passage is already found in Saṃghabhūti, T1547.486c27-487a01; and Buddhavarman/Daotai; T1546.314a27-b01.

qualities" of a Buddha.[1966] As we shall see, this concept is partially correct, but certainly only presents a part of the picture; it omits other important dimensions of the characterisation of the *dharmakāya,* and in so doing fails to penetrate beyond the surface of this definition to its true underlying import.[1967]

The definition of the *dharmakāya* as the eighteen *āveṇikadharmas* is usually taken from a passage in which the text is discussing respects in which all Buddhas are equal (as opposed, e.g., to their lifespan, etc.[1968] in which respect they are not equal). The Buddhas are said to be equal, among other respects, "with regard to the *dharmakāya*" (法身等).[1969] This is already telling, since it resonates with more radical statements, such as those we saw above in Lokakṣema's *Druma,* that the Buddhas are one in virtue of the *dharmakāya*;[1970] *Vibh* here stops short of asserting their absolute identity, but it is obviously tending in the same direction. The passage is also of interest, however, because it goes on to gloss exactly what this equivalence in virtue of the *dharmakāya* might mean:

[1966] This is the case, for example, in Ch. 2 of Guang Xing's *Concept of the Buddha;* see esp. 35-36, and more generally 35-44. See my review of Guang for criticisms on this score. It now seems apparent, however, that in my review, I failed to recognise the limited sense in which Guang's claim that the *dharmakāya* is understood as the *āveṇikadharmāḥ* captures a partial truth. My more general scepticism about Guang's faulty working methods made me reluctant to trust any of his conclusions, and I had not had the benefit of the careful close study of the sources reflected in the present work. Note, however, that even if we recognise that the eighteen *āveṇikadharmāḥ* do *enter into* the definition of the *dharmakāya* in *Vibh,* this is very far from meaning that the text's doctrine of *dharmakāya* can be adequately or exhaustively characterised primarily by reference to that category.

[1967] For some purposes or in some contexts, it seems that the inclusion of worldly *dharmas* (such as *mahākaruṇā,* "great compassion") in the list of *āveṇikadharmas* renders it an unsuitable definition of the *dharmakāya*; see le Vallée Poussin, "Documents" 70.

[1968] Other respects in which they are not equal, according to AK, are the families and castes into which they are born, the size of their physical body, the time for which their Dharma endures, etc.; VP V, 81.

[1969] The other respects in which Buddhas are equal are in their "equipment", that is, in the merits they have accumulated in virtue of countless aeons of prior *bodhisattva* practice; and in their service for the needs of other beings. Cf. AK 7.34, *sambhāradharmakāyābhyāṃ jagataś cārthacaryayā/ samatā sarvabudddhānāṃ nāyurjātipramāṇataḥ;* VP V, 79-81.

[1970] See above p. 767.

". . . that is to say, as one Buddha accomplishes (成就, */*sidh*) limitless merits [of]/(such as? 等) the eighteen unique properties [of a Buddha] (*āveṇikadharmas,* 十八不共法), viz. the ten powers (*bala*), the four confidences (四無畏, *caturvaiśāradya*), great compassion, and the three foundations of mindfulness (*smṛtyupasthāna*), (and so on? 等), so too do the other Buddhas, and thus we say [they are all] equal."[1971]

[1971] 謂如一佛成就十力四無所畏大悲三念住。十八不共法等無邊功德。餘佛亦爾故名平等, T1545.85a26-28. This passage is already present in the Buddhavarman/Daotai version of the text, for which see below, n. 2097. See also 624a13-15, where the same set of ideas is repeated almost verbatim. See also 131b14-21, where the three respects in which the Buddhas are equal are listed in slightly different order, and where the ten powers etc. are listed without mention of the category of *āveṇikadharmāḥ*.

We will have occasion to note later in this dissertation that this same doctrine of the "equality" of the Buddhas with respect to body and the *āveṇikadharmas* is found as early in the Chinese canon as Zhi Qian's *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa,* though not yet under the name of *dharmakāya;* see below, §4.5.2, p. 980. Lamotte notes that these are features of Sarvâstivāda Abhidharma Buddhology, *Vim* 138 n. 29, but in a manner that misleadingly implies (and seems to assume) that it therefore is derived *from* Sarvâstivāda when we find it in the *Vimalakīrti* context. In fact, as we will see in §4.5.2 below, the Chinese record indicates that Zhi Qian's *Vim* is the earliest context in which we can find these ideas, and they appear soon thereafter in the rather different context of Mokṣala's *Prajñāpāramitā;* on the other hand, we will see later in the present section that there is little reason for confidence that they necessarily predate these Mahāyāna instantiations in the Sarvâstivāda context.

Compare AKBh to 7.34, which presents a much more complex picture of the *dharmakāya* in respect of which all the Buddhas are equal. Vasubandhu holds that the "perfection" (*saṃpad)* of the *dharmakāya* is a perfection of fruit/effect as opposed to the perfection of cause constituted by the *saṃbhāra*; that it *includes* the perfection of (4) the physical body, here called *rūpakāya*; and that it otherwise constitutes perfection of (1) *jñāna,* (2) "abandonment" (*prahāṇa*) and (3) "power" (*prabhāva);* VP V,82. Various detailed explanations are given of each of these components of the complex *dharmakāya* so envisaged, VP V, 82-84, but for our purposes here, it is important to note several points. The analysis does not even mention the *āveṇikadharmas;* neither, however, does it mention *kṣayajñāna, anutpādajñāna* and the five *anāsravaskandha,* which shows that the conception of *dharmakāya* in AK is more complex than is recognised e.g. by Makransky. Perfection of *jñāna,* which is listed first (i.e. given pride of place?), is once more a gnostic perfection, in keeping with our general thesis here that embodiment in perfect gnosis is a central and neglected theme in the notion of the *dharmakāya* in these materials. Perfection of powers (*prabhāva;* see n. 1522) reads like an expanded list of the old *iddhi/ṛddhi* that we have seen are bound up with doctrines of embodiment (*manomayakāya*) as far back as DN 2 (see above p. 256). Perfection of the *rūpakāya* entails acquisition of the marks, prodigious strength, and also various other qualities already mentioned above n. 1871. On the whole, this AKBh analysis is interesting for at least further two reasons. First, it shows that the very old DN 2 model of elaboration of *manomayakāya* leading to physical supernatural powers (*iddhi*) and superknowledge (*abhiññā*) set a precedent of interrelations between embodiment, extraordinary physical attributes, and specific extraordinary knowledges that remained authoritative and vital for a very long time. Second, it is also noteworthy that AKBh goes significantly beyond *Vibh* here in deliberately tying together these physical-corporeal and gnostic dimensions under the head of the *dharmakāya,* in which respect AKBh's doctrine of embodiment is significantly more synthetic and systematised than that of *Vibh.*

We can also note, in connection with the present passage, that AKBh to 4.32 notes an opinion whereby one who takes ritual refuge in the Buddha takes refuge in the eighteen *āveṇikadharmāḥ*; VP III, 79; Makransky, *Buddhahood Embodied* 25. The text does not, however, overtly identify these *dharmas* with the *dharmakāya*.

Significantly, Yaśomitra glosses the notion of the *dharmakāya* "perfected" here by saying that it is the "series of untainted *dharmas* (i.e. *dharmas* "without outflow", *anāsrava*), or the revolution of the support/basis (*anāsravadharmasṃtāno dharmakāyaḥ/ āśrayaparāvṛtti vā).* Clearly by his time, the Yogācāra ideas we will later examine had been accepted to the point that they could be applied in commenting

Despite the fact that this passage, taken in isolation and on the basis of its Chinese syntax alone, harbours certain potential ambiguities, it seems clear that it does indeed, as Guang Xing states, represent an identification of the *dharmakāya* with the rubric of the eighteen *āveṇikadharmas*.[1972]

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upon a Sarvâstivādin text; it is also possible that his comment shows us something latent in the original Sarvâstivāda notion and the even older conceptions of the *anāsrava* upon which it is based.

We will see below that it can be shown that the rubric of *āveṇikadharmāḥ* is not the only important way *Vibh* conceives of the *dharmakāya*. Conversely, it is worth noting that the rubric of *āveṇikadharmāḥ* so named does not otherwise feature very largely in the text in any connection. There are only two other places, that I am aware of, where the eighteen *āveṇikadharmāḥ* are mentioned as such in *Vibh*. The *āveṇikadharmāḥ* are part of a definition of buddhahood itself at T1545.735c16-18, though without any mention of *dharmakāya;* they also come up in passing at 189b05-16 in a discussion of the difference between Buddhas, on the one hand, and *śrāvakas* and *pratyekabuddhas,* on the other. The individual items on the list are discussed elsewhere, however. For example, they are discussed extensively, without invocation of the category of *āveṇikadharmāḥ* or the notion of *dharmakāya,* in the important long passage at 1545.156c16-160c22, where the overarching rubric is rather that of "powers of mind" (意力; cf. AKBh introducing AK 31a, *mānasaṃ balam*). This passage immediately follows the discussion of the Buddha's immense physical strength, already mentioned above at n. 1879, where the rubric is "strength of body". The fact that the contrast at stake is also that between the "body of birth" and the *dharmakāya* is shown by a passage already cited from the same context that says that it is only the Buddha's physical strength that wanes with age; see passage cited at n. 1850. If we presume that the fact that the *āveṇikadharmas* are under discussion warrants the extrapolation of ideas here to the concept of the *dharmakāya* for the text, it is very interesting to see that the powers accruing to the "body of birth" are spoken of as just "powers of the body" but powers accruing to the *dharmas* comprising the *dharmakāya* are spoken of as "powers of the mind"; the implication seems almost to be that the *dharmakāya* is a kind of "mental body". Cf. in this regard however the discussion at AK & Bh 7.28-31, VP V, 66-74, which similarly arranges the discussion of "mental powers" and physical strength together, but without invoking the notion of *dharmakāya*. With regard to the *nārāyaṇa* strength of the Buddha's physical body, Vasubandhu simply uses the unmodified term "body" (*kāya; kāye . . . nārāyaṇaṃ balaṃ*); see e.g. VP V, 72-73.

[1972] Note that the wording of this list is somewhat garbled in Buddhavarman/Daotai also, for which see below n. 2097.

In my review of Guang's *Concept of the Buddha,* I was troubled by some of these potential ambiguities; 63-64. In particular, I was misled by the position of *deng* 等 in the sentence to imagine the possibility that the term *āveṇikadharmas* could refer to some set of items other than the ten powers, etc., 63 n. 31; but in light of what is said e.g. in AKBh about the *āveṇikadharmas,* it is clear that this is not a real possibility. Second, I was concerned that when the text explains the idea that the Buddhas might be equal in respect of the *dharmakāya* by urging that they all complete the "limitless merits" of the eighteen *āveṇikadharmas,* this left open the possibility that the *dharmakāya,* though accomplished on account of the merits of those *dharmas,* might be something other than them. However, a close examination of the contents of those *dharmas,* and comparison with e.g. the mention at AKBh to 4.32 of an opinion that one who takes refuge in the Buddha takes refuge in the *āveṇikadharmas* (though Vasubandhu there does not invoke the concept of *dharmakāya*) suggests that it is indeed most likely that the text here is identifying this rubric with the *dharmakāya* itself. Note, however, that despite the resolution of some of these doubts about Guang's interpretation of this passage, it is still true, as I show here, first, that the definition in terms of the *āveṇikadharmas* is not the only definition of *dharmakāya* operative in the text, and that he overlooks much other important material; and second, that among the various conceptions of *dharmakāya* at play in the text, the understanding of *dharmakāya* in terms of *āveṇikadharmas* is in fact a relatively minor part of the text's doctrine of *dharmakāya*. For these reasons, Guang's presentation of the

I said above that my primary thesis in the analysis of the concept of *dharmakāya* in *Vibh* (and, indeed, in Sarvâstivāda materials more broadly) is that that concept is centred on the Buddha's embodiment in his gnosis, variously understood, and that this central fact about the concept has been overlooked in previous scholarship. Already, in dealing with the correlation the text posits between the eighteen *āveṇikadharmas* and the *dharmakāya,* it is possible to begin seeing that this is true. The eighteen *āveṇikadharmas,* as the above quote makes clear, comprise ten "powers" (*bala*), four "confidences", three foundations of mindfulness, and great compassion. When we look in detail at the items on this list, however, we discover that the whole list breaks down to various aspects of the Buddha's special gnosis.

First, the ten "powers" are obviously gnostic in their focus in the fact that they are all kinds of special knowledge (*jñāna*),[1973] a fact which, incidentally, makes it clear why the text discusses them under the rubric of "mental powers" as opposed to "physical power/strength":[1974]

(1) the power of special knowledge of the possible and the impossible (處非處智力, *sthānâsthānajñānabala*);

(2) the power of special knowledge of the arising of *dharmas* [as a result of] *karma* 二業法集智力, *karmavipāka(/phala)jñānabala*;

Vibh doctrine of *dharmakāya* is still disproportionate and thereby distorts the facts, though it is not so wantonly mistaken as I feared at the time of my review.

[1973] Vasubandhu in AKBh explains that these *jñāna* are referred to as "powers" or "forces" (*bala*) only in the case of the Buddha, because his is a kind of knowledge that "knows without obstacle all the objects of knowledge" (*sarvatra jñeye jñānam avyāhataṃ*).

[1974] See n. 1879 for the description of his physical strength; n. 1971 for discussion of the rubric of "mental powers".

(3) the power of special knowledge of *dhyāna, vimokṣa, samādhi* and *samāpatti* (靜慮解脫等持等至發起雜染清淨智力, *dhyānavimokṣasamādhisamāpattijñānabala*);[1975]

(4) the power of special knowledge of [the dispositions of] various classes of beings (種種界智力, *nānādhātujñānabala*);[1976]

(5) the power of special knowledge of the aspirations[1977] of various beings (種種勝解智力, *nānâdhimuktijñānabala*);

(6) the power of special knowledge of superior and inferior [moral] faculties [of beings] (根勝劣智力, *indriyaparâparajñānabala*);

(7) the power of special knowledge of the ways that led to all destinies of rebirth (遍趣行智力, *sarvatragāminīpratipajjñānabala*);

(8) the power of special knowledge of the recollection[1978] of prior dwelling-places (宿住隨念智力, *pūrvanivāsajñānabala*);

(9) the power of special knowledge of the births and deaths of beings (死生智力, *cyutyupapādajñānabala*);

(10) the power of special knowledge of the destruction of taints (outflows) (漏盡智力, *āsravakṣayajñānabala*).[1979]

1975 On the *dhyānas, vimokṣas, samādhis* and *samāpattis* as part of a larger list of *buddhadharmas* found in common in Sarvâstivādin and Prajñāpāramitā sources, see above p. 794.

1976 The order of the following three items differs in AK.

1977 It is hard to imagine that a Chinese reader would instinctively derive any meaning like "aspirations" from 勝解, but it also seems clear that it is at least intended as a translation for this underlying Skt. I thus retain the Skt. sense in keeping with the principle that this is the best way to examine the history of the Indic concepts reflected in the Chinese texts, and that the likely reception of the ideas in China is irrelevant to such questions.

1978 Presuming that 隨念 is for *anusmṛti,* which is not found in AK's Skt.

1979 T1545.156c19-23; for Skt parallels (which appear to be slightly imperfect, perhaps reflecting a slightly different stage in the evolution of these concepts or a slightly different school of opinion; I have

The next items in the list of *āveṇikadharmas,* viz. the four respects in which a Tathāgata is confident, that is, "without fear" (Ch.) or "assured" (VP's translation of Skt. AK),[1980] are also all very close to the Tathāgata's special gnosis, either comprising it directly or representing its immediate derivatives. They are:[1981]

(1) confidence in perfect, complete awakening [to all *dharmas* Skt.] (正等覺無畏, *sarvadharmâbhisaṃbodhivaiśāradya*);

(2) confidence in having eternally destroyed all taints (outflows, *āsrava*) (漏永盡無畏, *sarvâsravakṣayajñānavaiśāradya*);

(3) confidence in the exposition of *dharmas* obstructing [realisation of the truth and deliverance] (說障法無畏, *antarāyikadharmavyākāraṇavaiśāradya*);

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preferred for no. 2 to translate from the Chinese of *Vibh* where forced to make a choice), see AK 7.28c-29 and Bh, VP V, 68-71. Note that the tenth of these "powers", in particular, is identical with the *kṣayajñāna* that is one of the two *jñāna* comprising *bodhi* on the AKBh definition studied below, and that this tenth power is thereby partially coterminous with the tenth *aśaikṣadharma* (*saṃyagjñāna*) and the fifth of the fivefold *anāsravaskandha*. We will return to this question below.

[1980] The term *vaiśāradya* has a special nuance in Buddhist terminology. Cf. ordinary Skt. *viśārada,* "skilled, wise, proficient, learned, clever, clear of mind". The Buddhist term, however, as the Chinese translation *wuwei* "fearless, dauntless" indicates, seems rather to carry connotations of perfect self-assurance and confidence, in the sense that the Buddha, in virtue of his perfection of the ten kinds of *jñāna* named as the ten "powers", is absolutely certain of these four things. With regard to the Chinese translation, cf. also Vasubandhu's gloss at AKBh to 7.32a-c, "The word *vaiśāradya* means 'absence of fear' (*nirbhāyatā*). Because of these [*vaiśāradyas* understood as] *jñānas,* [that is,] because he knows himself to have understood all *dharmas,* destroyed all taints, etc., the Buddha is exempt from fear." For the question of whether or not these *vaiśāradyas* are themselves *jñānas* or not, see immediately below. For background to this rubric, see also VP's note to AKBh introducing 7.32a, VP V, 74, n. 7, where he gives an Āgama source cited in the Yaśomitra's *Vyākhyā,* to which he finds parallels in EA and AN; for the latter, see the eponymous *Vesārajja*[=*Vaiśāradya*]*-sutta,* AN 4.1.1.8, PTS AN II, 8 ff.

[1981] Once more, the Skt. given is from AKBh (to 7.32a-c, VP V, 75), and does not correspond perfectly to the Chinese terms.

(4) confidence in the exposition of the paths leading to deliverance (說出道無畏, *nairyāṇikapratipadvyākaraṇavaiśāradya*).[1982]

That the first two of these items are very intimately related to the Buddha's gnosis should be immediately obvious. The first is a kind of confidence or assurance in the unshakeable nature of *anuttarasaṃyaksaṃbodhi* itself; whether or not that confidence is derivative of awakening itself or part and parcel of it, it is certainly inextricably tied up with the Buddha's gnosis, and a dimension of the overall experience of attaining it. The second is confidence in or deriving from the *jñāna* comprised by the destruction of all taints/outflows (*āsrava*), which is also obvious a kind or dimension of gnosis, and also, as we will see below, is itself central to other Sarvâstivāda definitions of the *dharmakāya.* The third and fourth kinds of "confidence" might perhaps be understood as slightly more indirectly related to gnosis, since strictly speaking they are confidence in skills of exposition that derive from that gnosis, rather than being bound up with the substance of the gnosis itself. Nonetheless, they are both skills relating to the exposition of the Dharma as a discourse about the truth which is the object or content of the Buddha's gnosis.[1983]

In fact, there seems even to have been controversy within the Sarvâstivāda fold itself as to whether these four "confidences" themselves comprised kinds of *jñāna,* or whether they were merely effects of *jñāna.* Vasubandhu asks rhetorically: "Why are *jñānas* [here] named *vaiśāradya?*" He goes on to explain that because of these attainments, understood as *jñānas,* the

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[1982] For these four categories in *Vibh,* see 1545.158a21-b13 etc.; see also AKBh 7.32a-c, VP V, 74-75.

[1983] Note that there are of course parallels elsewhere in Buddhist philosophy and doctrine with the notion that gnosis has its "theoretical" and "practical" sides, where the latter often comprises the various kinds of knowledge and skill necessary to the exercise of *upāyakauśalya*; think, for example of *tatpṛṣṭhalabdhajñāna* (as opposed to *nirvikalpakajñāna*) in Yogācāra.

Buddha is exempt from all fear,[1984] and then says, "Thus *vaiśāradya* is *jñāna*." However, he immediately disputes this conclusion, saying, "In our opinion, *vaiśāradya,* being an effect of *jñāna,* is not a *jñāna* by nature."[1985] That such a dispute could have existed, regardless of Vasubandhu's (doubtless authoritative) conclusion on the matter, is clear evidence of how closely bound up the "confidences" are with gnosis itself.

The close, even inextricable links between these four "confidences" and gnosis itself are also emphasised by the way the texts discuss the overlaps and identifies between them and the ten "powers" (i.e. ten kinds of *jñāna*).[1986]

The next category in the list of the eighteen *āveṇikadharmas* is of course the three "foundations of mindfulness" (*smṛtyupasthāna*). The details of each of these items need not concern us here;[1987] the basic point is each represents a different way that the Buddha maintains a state of "indifference, mindfulness and full consciousness" (大捨住念正知, *upekṣas . . . tathāgato. . . smṛtaḥ saṃprajānan*) regardless of the circumstances that might arise in the course of his teaching.[1988] This much should be enough to make it clear that, once more, we are confronted with fundamentally mental, not to say gnostic, qualities – mindfulness and consciousness.

[1984] Cited above n. 1980.

[1985] AKBh to 32a-c, VP V, 75.

[1986] T1545. 159a17-b02; see also AKBh to 7.32a-c, VP V, 75. It is of interest that the mappings proposed in both texts are fundamentally the same.

[1987] For a summary, see Guang Xing, *Concept of the Buddha* 40.

[1988] 1545.160b19-29, Skt. from AKBh to 7.32, cited VP V, 76.

That these "foundations of mindfulness" are fundamentally gnostic for the text is also shown by the fact that *Vibh* says outright that they are incorporated in the *jñāna* of what is possible and impossible that comprises the first of the ten "powers".[1989]

This brings us, finally, to the last of the *āveṇikadharmas,* "great compassion" (*mahākaruṇā*). Discussion of *mahākaruṇā* in Sarvâstivāda texts is very complex, but we need not enter into the arcane details here.[1990] That there are close links between even this item and gnosis is made explicit by the fact that *Vibh* itself states explicitly that it is "incorporated" in the first *jñāna* among the ten powers.[1991]

In sum, then, when we look into the details of what is said about them in both *Vibh* and AKBh, and also when we consider many of them in their own terms, all eighteen of the *āveṇikadharmas* are identified with kinds of *jñāna,* or at the very least (depending upon where a particular author might stand on some controversial issues), are understood as closely bound up with kinds of *jñāna,* perhaps as its products. Given that the various kinds of *jñāna,* that is, of the special knowledge attained in virtue of awakening, are clearly aspects of the Buddha's special gnosis in virtue of which he is a Buddha, we are surely justified in saying, therefore, that gnosis is the central focus of the whole rubric of the *āveṇikadharmas.*[1992]

1989 如是三種不共念住應知亦攝在處非處智力, T1545.160b29-c01. La Vallée Poussin notes this, AKBh V, 76 n. 1.

1990 For a summary of many of these details, see Guang Xing, *Concept of the Buddha* 40-44.

1991 問此大悲何力攝。答處非處智力攝, T1545.160b05-06.

1992 The fundamentally gnostic quality of the *āveṇikadharmas* are also emphasised in other ways by Vasubandhu in AKBh. He introduces the ten *āveṇikadharmas* in the context of his seventh chapter, on *jñāna;* he explains that the various *guṇas* of which the *āveṇikadharmāḥ* constitute the first and foremost exemplars are *jñānamaya,* or "made of (/by?) *jñāna*"; and he further notes that the *āveṇikadharmas* are acquired precisely at the moment when the *bodhisattva* realises the "special knowledge of the destruction [of the taints/outflows, *āsrava*]" ([*āsrava-*]*kṣayajñāna*), that is, the moment at which he "becomes and *arhat* and, at the same time, *buddha*"; AKBh to 7.27, VP V, 66.

This central unifying focus of the rubric has been overlooked in previous studies of the Buddha's bodies, however, as have its implications for the Sarvâstivāda understanding of the *dharmakāya* with which the *āveṇikadharmas* rubric is so closely identified in the passages with which we began our analysis here. I will argue below that this focus on embodiment in gnosis is in fact a unifying thread that also runs through a number of other, differing characterisations of the *dharmakāya* that are given elsewhere in the text. In order to make that argument, however, we need to look at those alternate characterisations, the task to which we now turn.

4.4.9 The "*aśaikṣadharmas* comprising *bodhi*" and the five *anāsravaskandhas* as the *dharmakāya* in Sarvâstivāda materials

In the perspective of the small scale of the overall secondary literature on Buddha bodies, another major interpretation of the *dharmakāya* in the Sarvâstivāda literature is that it comprises the five *anāsravaskandha* ("pure aggregates") of morality (*śīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), wisdom (*prajñā*), liberation (*vimukti*) and insight into the special knowledge of liberation (*vimuktijñānadarśana*).[1993] This interpretation is advanced by Louis de la Vallée Poussin in his article on "Sources d'Abhidharma" for the doctrine of the three refuges, and has been followed in the most significant major study on Buddha bodies in English to date, John Makransky's *Buddhahood Embodied*.[1994] For this reason alone, this interpretation and the sources for it must be assessed. As we shall see, this interpretation of the notion of *dharmakāya* also has its supports in the texts.

[1993] In his survey of Theravāda materials on Buddha bodies, Frank Reynolds notes that this doctrine is found in Buddhaghosa, but traces it no earlier in the Pāli materials; "Several Bodies", 380. Recall, of course, that in the context of the present study, we have already seen the treatment of these five "pure aggregates" in terms of the conceit of embodiment as early as Lokakṣema's *Aṣṭa,* and we have also seen this rubric applied to the relics in reliquary inscriptions as early as the first century of the Common Era. We will return to these connections below.

[1994] Specific citations for the relevant parts of these two works are given throughout the following.

We will also see, once more, that this conception of the *dharmakāya* also ultimately devolves upon the notion of the Buddha embodied in his gnosis, and the notion of embodiment in gnosis, in turn, allows us to traced broader links and commonalities between Sarvâstivāda visions of the Buddha's embodiment and ideas we have examined from other contexts.

Proper examination of this particular reading of the Sarvâstivāda *dharmakāya* requires that we take a detailed detour through the *Abhidharmakośa,* which is the single most important source of that reading as it has been propounded in contemporary scholarship. This detour will lead us to the question of the *aśaikṣadharma* or "qualities of those beyond further training", and we will see that this rubric is in fact probably coterminous with the five *anāsravaskandha.* Given that the two rubrics are identical, it will not surprise the reader that as for the *anāsravaskandha,* I will argue that in the case of characterisation in terms of *aśaikṣadharma,* also, the conception of *dharmakāya* centres on a hitherto overlooked core of embodiment in gnosis. Via this identity, we will be able to return to *Vibh* and better understand the identification of *dharmakāya* with the *aśaikṣadharmāḥ* in that text, also.

We already saw above,[1995] in connection with our discussion of the "body of birth", that in discussing the Buddha as the object of the ritual act of taking refuge, *Vibh* ridicules the idea that one might take refuge in the Buddha's "head, neck, belly, back" etc., and says rather that one properly takes refuge in the "*aśaikṣadharmāḥ* of the Buddha which comprise *bodhi*, that is, [in] the *dharmakāya*".[1996]

[1995] See n. 1871; we revisited this question briefly above p. 898.

[1996] 所歸依者謂佛無學成菩提法即是法身, T1545.177a14-18; see la Vallée Poussin, "Documents" 75. This understanding is already found in Buddhavarman/Daotai; see below n. 2094. Cf. AK 4.32, where it is said that one takes refuge in the *aśaikṣadharmāḥ* comprising the Buddha (*buddha . . . karān dharmān aśaikṣān*); VP III, 76-77. Obviously, this formula is almost identical to the *Vibh* wording, but Vasubandhu speaks of

In AKBh 4.32, we find a very similar definition of the Buddha as the object of ritual refuge-taking to the one seen in *Vibh* above.[1997] As in *Vibh,* it is the *aśaikṣadharmāḥ* that are identified as the "Buddha" in whom (in which) one takes ritual refuge, but in this context, the text further specifies that *bodhi* is comprised of *kṣayajñāna, anutpādajñāna* (as elsewhere, as we shall see below), in addition to (one dimension or kind of) *samyagdṛṣṭi.*[1998] However, unlike *Vibh,* AKBh does not specifically mention the *aśaikṣadharmāḥ* in this context, but rather adds that the Buddha is *bodhi* so defined "along with the *dharmas* that attend [those *dharmas*]" (*saparivārāḥ*).[1999] The question then becomes, of course, what is meant by this term "attendants" (*parivāraḥ*).

In examining AK for further clues about the *Vibh* definition of the *dharmakāya* given above, therefore, we must examine three separable questions: (1) the definition of *bodhi* as specific kinds of *jñāna;* (2) the definition of *aśaikṣadharmāḥ,* which is explicitly at play in *Vibh* but not in AK & Bh; (3) the content of AKBh's term "attendants" (*parivāraḥ*). We will look at each of these questions in turn.

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dharmas comprising *buddha* rather than *bodhi* (Ch. 菩提 is unambiguous on this point). See also e.g. Bh to 6.73c-74, where it is once more stated that the *aśaikṣadharmas* constituted a Buddha; VP IV, 293.

1997 This definition has been noticed, unsurprisingly, by la Vallée Poussin, and, indeed, favoured over the definition in terms of the *āveṇikadharmāḥ;* "Documents" 70. For discussion of the actual AKBh definition of *dharmakāya,* which is complex and would lead us too far from the precise topics we are examining here, see n. 1971 above.

1998 *Saṃyagdṛṣṭi* is one of the eight members of the eightfold noble path, and therefore has both *śaikṣa* and *aśaikṣa* variants; Bh to AK 6.75b, VP IV, 295. The same triad is also mentioned together as an arm of meditation called "purification" (*pariśuddhi*) as opposed to "modification" (*vivartana*), where the latter comprises all the gradated phases of meditation from the foundations of mindfulness of *vajrôpamasamādhi* (the final *samādhi* before the attainment of arhatship); AKBh to 6.12d, VP IV, 156.

1999 AKBh to 4.32, VP III, 77.

Bodhi is repeatedly defined throughout AK & Bh as *kṣayajñāna* and *anutpādajñāna.*[2000] This is a highly technical definition, and is intimately linked with the account given in AK of the moment of transition to arhatship and buddhahood, and the various characteristics that qualify the states arising thereafter. The exact moment of complete liberation is located at the transition between *vajrôpamasamādhi* ("the concentration like adamant", the last meditative accomplishment immediately before full awakening) and the arising of *kṣayajñāna.*[2001] This moment is explicitly identified with arhatship itself,[2002] and it is also the moment when a Buddha becomes a Buddha.[2003] Where the Arhat is of the class called "unshakeable/ unmoveable" (*akopyadharman*),[2004] he enters immediately after the arising of *kṣayajñāna* into *anutpādajñāna,* that is, the knowledge that tainted *dharmas* (*āsravas*) will not ever arise again.[2005]

[2000] AK 6.67a-b, VP IV, 282; Bh to 7.1b, VP V, 3. These two kinds of *jñāna* are identified with another twofold classification of pure *jñāna* also called pure, which is to say that they apply to the transcendent truth and not to matters in the world, viz. *dharmajñāna* ("special knowledge of *dharma*") and *anvayajñāna* ("consequent/subsequent special knowledge), which have as their respective objects the four noble truths in the *kāmadhātu,* or the *rūpa-* and *arūpyadhātu* respectively; AK & Bh 2-4c, VP IV, 4-5. Further technical details on *dharmajñāna* and *anvayajñāna* at AK & Bh 4d-6b, VP IV, 6-8. At AK 7 & Bh, it is specified that *kṣayajñāna* is the special knowledge, with regard to the four noble truths, that they are known, abandoned, etc.; and *anutpādajñāna* is knowledge with regard to the same truths that there is no more to know, abandon etc., i.e. that this former knowledge is exhaustive and complete; VP IV, 9-11. They are then fitted (last) into a schema of ten *jñānas* overall with complex interrelations, VP IV, 11-12 (note that this is not the same set of ten *jñānas* that comprises the ten "powers" under the head of the eighteen *āveṇikadharmas*). At one locus, *bodhi* is further identified with *saṃyagjñāna,* which is the tenth member of the *aśaikṣadharmāḥ;* and it is explained that this *saṃyagjñāna* is an umbrella term for both *kṣayajñāna* and *anutpādajñāna,* that is, for *bodhi* itself; AK 6.76d, VP IV, 298.

[2001] AK 6.44d-45a, VP IV, 230; see also Bh to AK 7.8, VP V, 13-14; 7.25a and Bh, VP V, 57.

[2002] AK 6.45b, VP IV, 230-231.

[2003] AKBh introducing AK 28ab, VP V, 66. See also AKBh 2.44ab and Bh, VP I, 204-205.

[2004] Defined later in the same chapter as part of a sixfold classification of types of Arhat, AK 6.56 ff., VP IV, 251 ff.

[2005] AK & Bh 6.50ab, VP IV, 240; see also AK 25b and Bh, VP V, 57-58. Where an Arhat is not "unshakeable", by contrast, he enters thereafter into another moment of *kṣayajñāna,* or into the *aśaikṣasaṃyagdṛṣṭi,* which latter therefore belongs to Arhats of both classes; AK 6.50b-d and Bh, VP IV, 240.

It is in the context of the same transition to arhatship and buddhahood that the text broaches the very definition of the term *aśaikṣa*, which is glossed as referring to those *dharmas* which are both untainted ("without outflows", *anāsrava*) and unconditioned (*asaṃskṛta*), where *śaikṣadharmas* are similarly untainted but conditioned (*saṃskṛta*).[2006] In fact, the text identifies this transition into arhatship with entry into the category of *aśaikṣa.* Thus, close (and unsurprising) connections exist between the category of *aśaikṣa* and that of *bodhi*, as defined by (the acquisition of) the two *jñānas, kṣayajñāna* and *anutpādajñāna.* Despite the fact that AK & Bh does not specify that the *aśaikṣadharmas* are part of the Buddha as the object of the ritual act of taking refuge, therefore, it is already clear from context that this doctrine must be understood or implicit, since the *aśaikṣadharmas* are an inalienable definitional component of buddhahood as defined by *bodhi,* which the text does identify with the Buddha as refuge.

This leads us naturally to the question of what the *aśaikṣadharmas* are for AK & Bh, and it turns out, on examination, that they are no more or less than the five *anāsravaskandha* themselves.

The *aśaikṣadharmas* are considered by the text to be ten in all. First, "perfect liberation" (*saṃyagvimukti*) and "special knowledge of perfect liberation" (*saṃyagvimuktijñāna*) are considered exclusively *aśaikṣa* in AKBh.[2007] (Note that these terms are reminiscent of the last two members of the fivefold rubric of *anāsravaskandha,* viz. *vimukti* and *vimuktijñānadarśana,* a point to which we will return below). The latter of these two items, viz. *saṃyagvimutkijñāna,* is

[2006] AKBh to 6.45, VP IV, 231-232.

[2007] Bh to AK 6.75b-d, VP IV 295-296. The text here says that the one qualified as *aśaikṣa* is so-called in virtue of the fact that, because of complete liberation from the bonds of all defilements, he is *prabhāvita* by *vimukti* and *vimuktijñānadarśana*, *vimuktitatpratyātmajñānābhyāṃ; aśaikṣas tu sarvakleśabandhanātyantanirmokṣād vimuktitatpratyātmajñānābhyāṃ prabhāvita iti tasyaiva tadvacanaṃ nyāyyam.* La Vallée Poussin translates *prabhāvita* "magnified" (*magnifié*); he probably has in mind the sense of the word Monier-Williams glosses " increase , spread out , extend , augment , multiply" (Monier-Williams, s.v. *prabhū*). On *pra/bhū,* see n. 1522.

also called *saṃyagjñāna,* is an umbrella term that is specified as referring to both of the *jñāna* comprising *bodhi,* viz. *kṣayajñāna* and *anutpādajñāna.*[2008] In addition to *saṃyagvimukti* and *saṃyag*[*vimukti*]*jñāna*, the eight members of the eightfold noble path are also considered to have both *śaikṣa* and *aśaikṣa* variants. On this understanding, one qualified as *aśaikṣa* possesses the *aśaikṣa* versions of all eight members of the path, viz. "*aśaikṣa* right view" (*aśaikṣī saṃyagdṛṣṭi*), etc. right through to "*aśaikṣa* right concentration" (*aśaikṣī saṃyaksamādhi*).[2009] Thus, the *aśaikṣadharmas,* in total, comprise for AK & Bh ten members in total: the eight members of the path when nothing is left to cultivate or learn about them, in addition to perfect liberation and perfect *jñāna,* where the latter is glossed as referring to the two special *jñānas* that comprise *bodhi.*

How, then, is this tenfold rubric to be identified with the fivefold set of *anāsravaskandha*? In order to answer this question, we must ask what the text means at 4.32 by *parivāraḥ,* "attendants", in its definition of the Buddha as refuge as *bodhi* "along with [the *dharmas* that] attend [it]." La Vallée Poussin identifies these "attendants" as the five *anāsravaskandhāḥ*, and John Makransky follows la Vallée Poussin in this identification.[2010] This identification, while it

[2008] AKBh to 6.76, VP IV, 298.

[2009] Bh to AK 6.75b, VP IV, 295.

[2010] The passages in primary sources cited by la Vallée Poussin himself for this identification do not seem to support it. La Vallée Poussin, "Documents" 86 n. 2, referring to AK Ch. 1 p. 12 (? *sic,* perhaps referring to 1.2, as Makransky seems to silently correct him; see below) and AKBh (in fact, seemingly, *Vyākhyā*) to 6.76, VP IV, 297. However, neither of these loci seem to offer sufficient support for the identification of the "attendants" with the five *anāsravaskandhāḥ.* At Bh to 1.27, the text only discusses which of the worldly *skandhas* the five pure *skandhas* each belongs to respectively (*śīla* to *rūpa,* the remainder to *saṃskāra*); VP I, 48. At 6.76, the text in fact only discusses *vimuktiskandha,* which is identified with the *saṃyagvimukti* comprising the ninth member of its tenfold schema of *aśaikṣadharmāḥ*; further said to be "double" (*dvidhā*, i.e. having *saṃskṛta* and *asaṃskṛta* aspects), and so on. It is only Yaśomitra's *Vyākhyā,* according to la Vallée Poussin's fn (IV 297 n. 2) that enumerates all five *anāsravaskandhas.* It is also impossible to see anything in this context that warrants la Vallée Poussin's identification of either *vimuktiskandha* alone or the five *anāsravaskandhas* altogether as the "attendants" of *bodhi.* Makransky, otherwise following la Vallée Poussin, refers to a more useful source at Bh to AK 1.2, *Buddhahood Embodied* 25; we will examine this passage immediately below. Note also that where la Vallée Poussin interpolates this definition of the "attendants" as the "five pure *skandhas*" at Bh to 4.32, this is unsupported in the Skt,

is justified, is less straightforward than la Vallée Poussin makes it seem, and, so far as I can determine, is only supported, and then somewhat tangentially, by AKBh 1.2.[2011]

There, the *kārikā* identifies "Abhidharma" itself, in the "ultimate" sense (*paramārthika*), as "immaculate *prajñā,* with its retinue" (*prajñâmalā sânucārâbhidharmaḥ*). To this, Bh adds,

> "Here, '*prajñā*' means 'discernment of *dharmas*' (*dharmāṇāṃ pravicayaḥ*).[2012] '*Amalā*' ('immaculate') means *anāsrava* ('taintless, without outflows'). 'With its retinue' means 'with its attendants' (*saparivārā*). In this manner, we come to say that the collection of the fivefold collection of *anāsravaskandha* is 'Abhidharma'."[2013]

The identity between the *prajñā* discussed here and *bodhi,* in turn, would seem to be supported by AK 7.1b and Bh, which speaks of *kṣayajñāna* and *anutpādajñāna* as *dhī. Dhī* here seems to be used *metri causa* as a synonym for *prajñā,* and la Vallée Poussin freely uses the term *prajñā* for *dhī* in his translation, presumably on the basis e.g. of Bh to 7.1c. The *kārikā* at 7.1c states that "all other sacred (*aryā*) wisdom (*dhī*) are both [*jñāna* and *dṛk = darśana*]" (*tadanyobhayathāryā dhīḥ*), and Bh comments on this by saying that "all taintless (*anāsravā* , 'without outflows')

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which merely reads *kṣayajñānādayaḥ saparivārāḥ.* La Vallée Poussin then further says in a footnote that "this means the *dharmakāya*", and refers us to 7.34; at this latter locus, we do indeed get a long definition of the *dharmakāya,* which, however, nowhere mentions the five *anāsravaskandha*!

2011 Makransky points us to this passage, *Buddhahood Embodied* 25; but does not explore the complications in ensuring that it does indeed refer to the attendants of *bodhi* as defined at 4.32.

2012 This definition is echoed verbatim, and *prajñā* called *mati,* at Bh to 2.24, VP I, 154.

2013 AKBh to 1.2a, VP I, 3. My translation of the last sentence differs from that of la Vallée Poussin. He translates, "Ce qu'on appelle la 'suite' (*anucara*) [de la *prajñā*], c'est son escorte (*parivāra*), [à savoir] les cinq *skandhas* purs [qui coexistent à la *prajñā*]" (the square brackets are my additions, to show those parts of the translation that appear to be la Vallée Poussin's own interpretative interpolations). To this, Skt. reads *evam anāsravaḥ pañcaskandhako 'bhidharma ity uktaṃ bhavati;* Xuanzang 如是總說無漏五蘊名爲對法, T1558.1b04; and Paramārtha 若爾則說無流五陰。名阿毘達磨, T1559.162a03-04. In other words, all of these three versions agree that the five *anāsravaskandha* alone are called "Abhidharma", with no further mention of *prajñā.* I can only conclude that la Vallée Poussin was here paraphrasing for sense rather than translating word for word, and that he presumed, on the basis of the identification of *prajñā* with Abhidharma just made, to replace the word *abhidharma* by *prajñā,* and further, to infer that in the phrase *anāsravaḥ pañcaksandhako 'bhidharma, anāsravaḥ pañcaksandhako* operates as a *bahuvrīhi* modifying *abhidharmaḥ.* Even with this much interpretative charity, however, I cannot see that la Vallée Poussin's translation is really justified, when it seems clearer that all three versions of the text agree in positing a different, much simpler, relation between the *anāsravaskandhas* and *abhidharma* – (at least nominal) identity.

wisdom (*prajñā*) other than the *kṣāntis* and *kṣaya-* and *anutpādajñāna* are both *jñāna* and *dṛṣṭi* (*kṣāntikṣayānutpādajñānebhyo 'nyā 'nāsravā prajñā dṛṣṭiḥ jñānaṃ ca*).[2014] It is clear from this comment that Vasubandhu himself considers *dhī* and *prajñā* synonymous; it is therefore also clear, from the mention of *kṣayajñāna* and *anutpādajñāna* under the name of *dhī* at 7.1b, that *prajñā* is a term that can be used for *jñāna.*[2015]

Upon the basis of these terminological identifications, it seems a safe (though not necessary) inference that the AKBh 1.2 definition of Abhidharma just cited can indeed be drawn upon to determine the identity of the "attendants" of *bodhi,* as referred to in the AKBh 4.32 definition of the Buddha as an object of refuge-taking which is our focus in this analysis. This means, therefore, that la Vallée Poussin and Makransky are justified in saying that the Buddha as refuge comprises *bodhi* and the five *anāsravaskandhas*.

Indeed, we can support this identification from another direction, by recalling to mind what we saw above AKBh itself says about the *aśaikṣadharmāḥ* when it sets out to define them positively. As we just saw, AKBh defines the *aśaikṣadharmāḥ* in terms of a tenfold set comprising the *aśaikṣa* versions of all the members of the eightfold noble path, in addition to *saṃyagvimukti* and *saṃyagjñāna*. On the other hand, however, we should recall that the eightfold noble path is often analysed in terms of a more basic underlying threefold rubric of *śīla, samādhi* and *prajñā,* that is, in terms of the first three members of the fivefold *anāsravaskandha* rubric.[2016] If these

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[2014] VP V, 3.

[2015] In fact, it seems from the opening parts of Bh to Ch. 7 that *dhī = prajñā* is a broader blanket term that covers two not coterminous categories of *jñāna* and *dṛṣṭi/darśana*.

[2016] See MN 44, the *Cūḷavedalla-sutta,* where Sister Dhammadinnā declares this subordination of the eightfold noble path to these three aggregates in reply to a query from her former husband Visākha. Thus, *śīlaskandha* includes right speech (*saṃyagvāc*), right action (*saṃyakkarmānta*) and right livelihood (*saṃyagājīva*); *samādhiskandha* includes right effort (*saṃyagvyāyāma*), right mindfulness (*saṃyaksmṛti*) and

three *skandhas* thus include, in their sum, all eight of the members of the path in their *aśaikṣa* versions, this means that, by the addition of *vimukti* and *vimuktijñāna* in each case, the tenfold rubric of the *aśaikṣadharmāḥ* as expounded in AKBh and the fivefold rubric of the *anāsravaskandha* are exactly coterminous. This means that the AKBh 4.32 definition of the Buddha refuge in terms of *bodhi* and "attendants" varies only in wording from the *Vibh* definition from which we began, in terms of "the *aśaikṣadharma* that comprise *bodhi*".[2017]

WIth this somewhat complex analysis of relevant concepts in AKBh in hand, we can now turn our attention back to the *Vibh* definition from which we began, and related passages in that same text. Recall, to begin with, that the definition states that one takes refuge in the "*aśaikṣadharmāḥ* of the Buddha which comprise *bodhi*, that is, [in] the *dharmakāya*".[2018]

Our understanding of this passage can be supplemented by several other statements scattered through the text. First, the definition itself is echoed elsewhere in the text: "Here [in the

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right concentration (*saṃyaksamādhi*); and *prajñāskandha* includes right view (*saṃyagdṛṣṭi*) and right thought (*saṃyaksaṃkalpa*). See Ñāṇamoli 398.

[2017] A close relation between *aśaikṣadharmāḥ* and the five *anāsravaskandha* in Sarvâstivāda more generally is also supported by an extended passage attested in both versions of JñP and all two of three versions of *Vibh,* which discusses the *anāsravaskandha* in depth; throughtout this passage, each item in turn is referred to as the **aśaikṣaśīlaskandha,* the **aśaikṣasamādhiskandha* etc., so that for this corpus, it would be at least equally accurate to refer to the rubric as a whole as the "five **aśaikṣaskandha*". In JñP, see T1543.777b04-07 and 778a26-b10, T1544.923c25-924a07; in *Vibh,* T1545.171c05-172c04, T1546.130c15-131a12. The passage in question seems not to be found in the earliest (Saṃghabhūti) version, where however we do see the term "body" used of the five *anāsravaskandhas* : 戒身定身慧身解脫身解脫知見身, T1547.459b02-03. In fact, it seems that on the whole, it is more common in the Sarvâstivāda Abhidharma corpus to refer to these *skandhas* as *aśaikṣa* than *anāsrava*. We only find a few references to *anāsravapañcaskandha* 無漏五蘊, e.g. at T1537.505a02-03; T1542.733b21, 738a21, etc.; T1545.397a23-24, 727, b17-18, esp. 797a18-799c21, etc.; at none of these places is it specified that these five *skandhas* are meant (e.g. they are not identified singly by name), nor is any connection to *dharmakāya* apparent. In fact, I was unable to find anywhere in this corpus this set with its individual *skandhas* named by e.g. *anāsravaśīla*[*skandha*] etc.

[2018] A more extended discussion of the nature of the Buddha-refuge is found in *Vibh* comments to this definition at T1545.177a25-b13. This definition of the Buddha-refuge, minus the explicit invocation of the term *dharmakāya,* is also already found in JñP itself: 諸歸依佛者。何所歸依。答若法實有現有想等想。施設言說。名爲佛陀。歸依彼所有無學成菩提法。名歸依佛, T1544.924c15-17.

doctrine of the refuges,] 'Buddha' means the *aśaikṣadharma* in the Buddha's body, and a taintless faith ('without outflows, *anāsrava*) in that [Buddha so defined] is termed 'clear-minded faith in the Buddha' (佛證淨, **buddhaprasāda*)."[2019] Elsewhere, in a different context, the text reinforces this understanding of the Buddha and his body when it declares (without using terms relating to the body), "All the *aśaikṣadharmas* possessed by the World-Honoured One are termed 'Buddha'."[2020] In a different context again, the text specifies what it means by *aśaikṣadharmas* with a definition: "What are the *aśaikṣadharmas*? The five *aśaikṣaskandhas;*"[2021] thus reinforcing by a roundabout route the arguments advanced above that the tenfold classification of *aśaikṣadharmas* found in AKBh is merely another way of talking about the *anāsravaskandhas* and vice versa.

Thus, it is clear that *Vibh* quite consistently identifies Buddha with the *aśaikṣadharmas,* and that they are further understood to comprise the Buddha's body (unqualified) or *dharmakāya*. It is also clear that for this text, the *aśaikṣadharmas* are the five **aśaikṣaskandhas,* which we have elsewhere called the *anāsravaskandhas,* and which we have seen are identical in content to the

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[2019] T1545.533b20-21. Repeated soon afterward as part of a commentarial analysis, 533c20-21. For a parallel, see AKBh to 6.73c-74ab, VP IV, 293.

[2020] 世尊所有諸無學法說名爲佛, T1545.620c12-13.

[2021] 問無學法云何。答無學五蘊, T1545.396c04. This definition is already found in the Buddhavarman/Daotai version of the text, 云何無學法。答曰。無學五陰, T1546.296a13. Note that this is the only place in the text, to my knowledge, that justifies the identification of the *aśaikṣa-/anāsravaskandha* with the *dharmakāya* in *Vibh,* and this by the roundabout expedient of combining this passage with passages that say that the *dharmakāya* is to be identified with the *aśaikṣadharmas.*

I was mistaken on this point in my review of Guang's *Concept of the Buddha,* which was written in 2006 before I had undertaken the painstaking research presented here. There, I said that "the text [i.e. *Vibh*] tends, on the whole, to identify the *dharmakāya* with the five *anāsravaskandha* or 'aggregates without outflow', that is, *śīla, samādhi, prajñā, vimukti* and *vimuktijñāna,*" 64. It is now apparent that my confidence that this is the case was based on excessive faith in the authority of Makransky and particularly la Vallée Poussin. The generally excellent quality of their scholarship led me to expect that their characterisation of *Vibh* and Sarvâstivāda in general in these terms would be accurate. It is now apparent that this faith was slightly misplaced, and that my statement in my review was oversimplistic and should be modified along the lines followed here.

tenfold breakdown of the *aśaikṣadharmas* given in AKBh. This means that the definitions of the two texts of the Buddha-refuge are almost identical, except for surface semantic differences. A further, more significant difference between the way this doctrine is presented in the two texts is that in AKBh it is in fact not presented as a doctrine of *dharmakāya,* where it is in *Vibh;* and, conversely, that AKBh elsewhere presents its own complex synthetic understanding of *dharmakāya* in terms that are nowhere echoed in *Vibh.*[2022]

In fact, not only is it possible to collapse the apparently variant definitions of AKBh and *Vibh* into one another in this manner; it is also possible to telescope either expression of this seemingly complex and multipartite classification of Buddhahood in on itself. Recall that, as we already saw above, the fifth and final member of the *anāsravaskandha* rubric, and the tenth member of the *aśaikṣadharmāḥ* rubric, viz. *vimuktijñānadarsana/saṃyagjñāna,* is defined by AKBh as comprising *kṣayajñāna* and *anutpādajñāna,* that is, precisely the two *jñāna* that are also elsewhere identified with *bodhi.* Thus, when *Vibh* says that the Buddha as refuge is constituted by the *aśaikṣadharma* comprising *bodhi,* that same *bodhi* is already incorporated in the tenth of the *aśaikṣadharma*; when AKBh speaks of "[*bodhi* defined as] *kṣayajnāna, anutpādajnāna* and its attendants", and it means by those "attendants" the five *anāsravaskandha,* it also turns out that the fivefold set of "attendants" on its own already incorporates *bodhi* itself. Thus, in both cases, it seems that the Buddha as refuge is ultimately comprised merely of the category of *aśaikṣadharma-cum-anāsravaskandha,* with *bodhi,* in one guise or another, given pride of place therein.

The pride of place given to *bodhi* in these definitions, however, which is especially notable given that *bodhi* is also included under one of the heads of the subclassification operative in

[2022] See, once more, n. 1971 for a description of this understanding.

each case, leads us immediately to one of two broader implications of this understanding of buddahood and the *dharmakāya* in the context of the larger issues that interest us here. It seems clear that, as with the association of the *dharmakāya* and the *āveṇikadharma* rubric above, this definition of the *dharmakāya* is oriented around a central focus on the Buddha's embodiment in his gnosis.

Recall, generally, that this whole discussion, according to the exposition of AKBh, hinges on the moment of transition from the very last of the meditative attainments that precede and lead to awakening (the "concentration that is like adamant", *vajrôpamasamādhi*) to arhatship and buddhahood itself.[2023] At almost exactly the same moment (strictly speaking, in part at least in quick succession) the new Buddha acquires the two *jñānas* that comprise *bodhi,* and also, presumably, converts his attainments on the eightfold path into the *aśaikṣa* variants, which are defined precisely by the fact and knowledge that "What is to be done is done" etc., i.e. that there he has "no need for further training" (*aśaikṣa*). In other words, this moment is of its essence a moment of gnostic attainment, and any "attendant" phenomena follow upon and are ancillary to that central gnostic fact, as is shown by the language of the texts themselves ("attendant" *parivāra,* "accompanying" etc.).

Both definitions of buddhahood or the *dharmakāya* (*Vibh*), in terms of the five *anāsravaskandhas* or the tenfold *aśaikṣadharmas*, are therefore fundamentally gnostic in focus, just like the definition in terms of *āveṇikadharmas*. Neither is it insignificant, in this regard, that AK and Bh discusses the *āveṇikadharmas* immediately following its treatment of the moment of transition to arhatship and Buddhahood, as represented by the arising of *bodhi cum kṣayajñāna* and *anutpādajñāna*. The various kinds of specific *jñāna* described under the head of the "ten powers",

[2023] AKBh leading into 7.28, VP V, 66, cited above, n. 1992.

for instance, which played a large part in my analysis above of the gnostic focus of that rubric, are part and parcel of the gnosis broadly called *bodhi* itself, or, at the very least, its close consequences.

We have discovered, therefore, as a central theme running through these various bristling technical definitions of *dharmakāya,* a common central theme of the Buddha's embodiment in gnosis. This keynote in Sarvâstivāda discourse about the *dharmakāya* has been unobserved in secondary scholarship to date, which has generally been too focused on one or the other rubric, and too ready to settle for paraphrase of the Sarvâstivāda discourse on its own terms, without digging beneath the surface to see what central ideas drive and animate it.

The identification of this gnostic focus to the definition of buddhahood and the *dharmakāya* in terms of the *ānāsravaskandha/aśaikṣaskandha/aśaikṣadharma* leads us in turn directly to a second, even broader implication of our findings: its association with a more widespread pattern of associating the Buddha's embodiments of various kinds with the five "pure aggregates" (*anāsravaskandha*) in a number of different doctrinal and practical contexts, and the implications of our analysis here of the gnostic focus in the rubric of the *anāsravaskandhas* for the wider patterns of use of that rubric in discourse about the Buddha's embodiments. The centrality of the rubric of the *anāsravaskandhas* for embodiment discourse links Sarvâstivāda doctrine to at least two other major bodies of materials.

In one direction, we have had a number of occasions to observe in this thesis that as far back as the turn of the common era, it was common, in reliquary inscriptions, to describe the relics of the Buddha as "quickened" (*paribhāvita*) by the five *anāsravaskandha* or some subset thereof.

In another direction, we have also noted that in the earliest document of the Prajñāpāramitā literature available to us, Lokakṣema's translation of *Aṣṭa,* the corporeal conceit is peculiarly emphasised in passages that invoke the rubric of the five *anāsravaskandhas.*[2024] In the same text, we also had occasion to observe a gnostic focus in doctrines of embodiment, when we saw that the most heavily emphasised doctrine of embodiment exhibited by the text is arguably a set of ideas that hold that the Buddha is embodied in his *sarvajña*[*tā*](*-ātmabhāva*), and further, that this embodiment is to be closely identified with *anuttarasaṃyaksaṃbodhi* and *prajñāpāramitā* itself.

The link this central emphasis on the Buddha's embodiment in his gnosis provides between the otherwise seemingly disparate discursive domains of Prajñāpāramitā, the practice of the relic cult, and Sarvâstivāda Abhidharma arguably suggests that in this epoch of Buddhist history, the notion of the embodiment in gnosis was a major theme shared across a wide range of Buddhist communities and contexts. We will return to this large theme in the overall conclusion to this section of this dissertation, where it will be more appropriate to explore such general issues.

4.4.10 **Nairmāṇikakāya* as a supposed body of the Buddha in *Vibh*

Nearly eighty years ago, the daunting Louis de la Vallée Poussin claimed that the Sarvâstivāda sources we are studying here also recognise a third kind of body, in addition to the *dharmakāya* and the body of birth: the **nirmāṇakāya* (*huashen,* 化身).[2025] La Vallée Poussin seems to have

[2024] In this connection, note that in earlier versions of the passage discussed in n. 2017 above, the *anāsrava-/aśaikṣaskandhas* are called "body" *shen* 身: thus Saṃghadeva/Fonian JñP, T1543; Buddhavarman/Daotai's *Vibh,* T1546;. In Xuanzang's versions of these texts alone (T1544, T1545) is the term *shen* replaced with 蘊. Of course, we have already noted in the Prajñāpāramitā context that Zhu Fonian, in particular, seems to have stuck with the translation of this rubric by *shen,* which dates back to Lokakṣema, after other translators moved to other terms. I have also already observed that Saṃghadeva, Fonian's collaborator on this translation, also uses *shen* in his MA; see n. 1617.

[2025] La Vallée Poussin, "Appendice" 770-773, esp. 772-773.

based this claim entirely upon a single passage in *Vibh*,[2026] in which the text asks why the Buddha had not left behind such a body when he entered into *parinirvāṇa,* so that he might continue to teach the *dharma* thereafter to the benefit of sentient beings.[2027] However, while the idea of a possible *nirmāṇakāya* this single passage in isolation might indeed seem to bear a close resemblance to the notion of the *nairmāṇikakāya* known from elsewhere,[2028] closer examination of its context in other passages using the same term or wording in *Vibh* show that this resemblance is largely coincidental. It seems, therefore, that la Vallée Poussin's identification of a supposed Sarvâstivāda **nirmāṇakāya* is another instance of his overall tendency in this study, already observed above in a different connection, to work too hard to fit all the materials to the Procrustean bed of a supposedly perennial three-body theory of the Buddha.[2029]

In fact, it seems rather that the term *huashen,* which features in a number of locations in the text in both nominal uses ("body produced by magic") and verbal ("to produce a body by magic"), is not special to the Buddha, and further, that even where the elaboration of such a body is attributed to the Buddha (in many cases, as above, hypothetically), it is not in any sense that truly matches to the "classic" understanding of *nairmāṇikakāya.* In what follows, I will lay out my reasons for thus rejecting la Vallée Poussin's claim through a cursory survey of a representative majority of the passages where the term features.

[2026] In the same section of "Appendice", la Vallée Poussin also examines an eclectic range of other sources, but these seem all to be problematised as evidence for the claim that Sarvâstivāda recognises a *nirmāṇakāya* by one or both of two shortcomings: (1) they are not Sarvâstivāda sources; (2) they only recognise related concepts, but do not speak overtly of a *nirmāṇakāya* as such.

[2027] T1545.698b09-10, b27-28.

[2028] That is to say, the *nirmāṇakāya* as it enters into the *trikāya* model. See p. 7 for a brief characterisation.

[2029] See above §3.2.6.

Immediately after the passage quoted by la Vallée Poussin, the text also contemplates the possibility that a Buddha might elaborate a **nirmāṇabuddha* (化佛, referred to immediately thereafter as **nirmāṇakāya* 化身), replete with all the marks, and make the magical body sit silent while he talks, and vice versa; some bizarre considerations follow, as the learned doctors detail the precise sort of multi-tasking mental processes this extraordinary feat entails.[2030] It is important to note that the same passage also considers the contrast with the situation when "great disciples" (*mahāśrāvaka*) also elaborate such magical bodies, so that the power of *nirmāṇakāya* is not ascribed to the Buddha alone. Here, as in la Vallée Poussin's example, we note that although the text is indeed contemplating the possibility of the Buddha himself elaborating a *nirmāṇakāya,* the emphasis is on hypothetical or counterfactual situations.

Elsewhere, among the various theories proposed to explain the fact that the Buddha can, as he assures Ānanda, travel to the *brahmāloka* even in his "body of the mundane elements born of father and mother", two speculative explanations invoke the concept of *nirmāṇakāya.*[2031] The concept is also invoked in one of the theories to explain how the Buddha won his contest of hide-and-seek with Mahābrahman, though here the term is used in a verbal sense: "[The Buddha] transformed his body (化身) so that it could not be seen."[2032] In these examples, also, though it is true that the capacity to generate a *nirmāṇakāya* is ascribed to the Buddha and this ascription is assumed as part of the explanations mooted for his miraculous acts or powers, we

[2030] T1545.698c18-28. See AK & Bh 7.51c, VP V, 118-119, where Skt. only uses the term *nirmāṇa*. More generally, although la Vallée Poussin also cites AK (7.48-53, VP V, 112-122, cited at "Appendice" 771) for his claim that Sarvâstivāda Abhidharma recognises a *nirmāṇakāya* of the Buddha, the text nowhere uses the term *nirmāṇakāya* (or **nirmāṇabuddha*). The current passage can be traced back at least to the *Prajñaptiśāstra,* T1538.526a08-20, for which see below; that text speaks of a "magical person" 化人, however, and not a *nirmāṇakāya.*

[2031] T1545.699b10-12.

[2032] 化身令不顯現, T1545.66a06-13.

note once more that the text is in speculative or hypothetical mode. That is, the only situations in which the text *does* predicate such bodies to the Buddha are those in which parties to doctrinal debate are speculating, in a hypothetical mode, on the means by which the Buddha accomplished certain miraculous feats; where they are considering hypothetically whether the Buddha has the power to accomplish a certain feat or not; or where they are asking counterfactually (as in la Vallée Poussin's own example) why the Buddha *does not* elaborate a *nirmāṇakāya* in certain circumstances, when it is certainly true in the abstract that he could have done so, as the foremost member of the more general class of beings with that power.

Elsewhere in the text, *nirmāṇakāya* feature in contexts where they are ascribed to beings other than the Buddha. The term features as part of a discussion of whether it is possible for a magical voice to speak apart from a magically elaborated body (*nirmāṇakāya*), or whether in all such cases there must also be a magical body for the voice to speak from.[2033] The same term is also used, for example, to label the copy of the *kāmadhātu* body that an accomplished meditator can produce and project into the *rūpadhātu* in virtue of meditative powers, such that the *nirmāṇakāya* speaks there when they speak here, walks there when they walk here, etc.[2034] *Nirmāṇakāya* is also the term used for the bodies magically produced by Māra's three daughters when they tempted the *bodhisattva* under the *bodhi* tree, by transforming themselves into hundreds of women.[2035] It is also used for the Buddha body magically produced by Māra for the benefit of Upagupta, when the latter lamented the fact that he had lived too late to see the Buddha's physical body.[2036]

[2033] T1545.640b04-13.

[2034] T1545.696b24-697a06.

[2035] T1545.697c07-15.

[2036] T1545.698a09-22.

In sum, the overall impression conveyed by these passages is that the text does indeed recognise the possibility of the Buddha elaborating a *nirmāṇakāya,* but this is only part and parcel of a more general assumption that spiritually powerful beings, including *mahāśrāvakas,* Māra and his daughters, accomplished meditators, and indeed the Buddha can elaborate at will. Of course, it is true that the capacity to elaborate such *nirmāṇakāya* was never confined to the Buddha alone, even in later texts where such bodies were regularly ascribed to the Buddha as part of his overall complex schema of embodiment after *trikāya* theory. However, in *Vibh,* it is notable that the text never actually takes that next step of ascribing a *nirmāṇakāya* to the Buddha as part of his regular schema of embodiment. Furhter, where the Buddha is ascribed with such a body, the text is always speculating or entertaining hypotheses.

We are still far, therefore, from the conceptual world in which the Buddha regularly elaborates *nirmāṇakāya* that (appear to) perdure for the duration of an entire lifetime; where such bodies are elaborated primarily for the purpose of teaching sentient beings (the only instance of this in the whole text is la Vallée Poussin's example, which is in fact counterfactual, and in the end holds that he *did not* do so); and, in particular, where his final earthly body is interpreted as such a *nirmāṇakāya.* We can only conclude that la Vallée Poussin's claim that *Vibh* recognises the *nirmāṇakāya* as one of three bodies "of the Buddha" is one of the master's occasional Homeric nods, and that the text in fact posits no such special Buddha body.

This brings to a conclusion our survey of the various doctrines of embodiment in *Vibh.* Thus, one task remains to us before we can begin framing conclusions about doctrines of embodiment in the Sarvâstivāda Abhidharma generally, and their significance in the context of the overall development of doctrines about the body of the Buddha. In what follows, we will

quickly sketch parallels to and divergences from the *Vibh* doctrines examined thus far in the other "early" texts of the school, to get a sense of the extent to which *Vibh* is indeed representative of that literature on the question of the Buddha's embodiments, and to line those findings up against the rough relative chronology of that literature, in order to see whether anything obvious emerges about the development of these ideas over time.

4.4.11 Ideas about embodiments in other texts in the "early" Sarvâstivāda Abhidharma canon

When we compare the doctrines of the Buddha's embodiments in *Vibh* and those in its predecessor texts in the Sarvâstivāda Abhidharma canon, the lesson that emerges most starkly is that the ideas we have been examining above represent, on the whole, a rather sudden burst of interest in the very problematic of the Buddhas embodiments in *Vibh.* In other words, there is very little interest in this problematic in the six texts that precede JñP in the canon, and even, significantly, in JñP itself, the root text to which *Vibh* is a commentary. In what follows, we will briefly survey the evidence in this corpus for each of the major concepts we examined above for *Vibh* in turn. Within the discussion of each concept, we will go through the texts in the rough chronological order laid out in the "Introduction" (§4.4.1) to this section.

The term *rūpakāya,* notably, almost *never* refers to a body of the Buddha in this earlier corpus. It refers only to the case of the ordinary sentient beings in the *kāma-* or *rūpadhātu* in the few places where it occurs in the *Saṃgītiparyāya*[2037] and the *Dharmaskandha.*[2038] The earliest text in which *rūpakāya* is used of a body of the Buddha (only once) is thus the *Prajñaptiśāstra.*[2039]

[2037] T1536.437c25-439a17, 446b29-447a17.

[2038] The text mentions the term **rūpakāya* in one passage (twice), where it clearly refers to the case of an ordinary sentient being (it is part of an analysis of the twelvefold chain of dependent origination), and where it is further said to be a "conventional designation" (施設, *prajñapti*); T1537.509b19-21.

[2039] The text contains a version of the odd pericope we have already studied above in the context of *Vibh,* which claims that the Buddha can travel to the Brahma Heavens not only in his *manomayakāya,* but also

Thereafter it never appears again until *Vibh* itself, being entirely absent in the *Dhātukāya,* the *Prakaraṇapāda,* the *Vijñānakāya,*[2040] and JñP. When we recall that the term *rūpakāya* is only used of the Buddha once even in *Vibh,* and even then only in the Xuanzang translation, it becomes transparent just how tenuous are the grounds for the common assumption that "the" Sarvâstivāda predicate a two-body theory of the Buddha with *rūpakāya* as one of its components.

We saw above that one of the key contexts wherein *Vibh* discusses the "body of the Buddha", without naming specifically one kind of body or another, is when it discusses the Buddha's thirty-two marks of the *mahāpuruṣa* and various other special physical characteristics. This doctrine itself is almost entirely absent from the Sarvâstivāda Abhidharma corpus before *Vibh.* Of all seven texts earlier than *Vibh,* it only appears twice in the *Prakaraṇapāda.* In both these

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in his physical body. See above p. 865 for this same passage in the *Vibh* context. In this version, the echoes of the DN 2 pericope (which we have already recalled in connection with the notion of *mātṛpitṛkasaṃbhavakāya*, see p. 863) describing the physical body are even clearer and more detailed: the Buddha's physical body is described as a " crude *rūpakāya,* comprised of the four gross elements . . . (四大所成麁重色身)"; a "crude *rūpakāya,* a composite of the four gross elements, created by numerous conditions, such as the impure *kalala* (embryo) [created] of father and mother, etc. . . requiring all kinds of maintenance, viz. food, drink, clothing, bathing and nourishment; a *dharma* destined ultimately to destruction, extinction and dispersal" 色身麁重四大和合父母不淨羯邏藍等眾緣所成 . . . 以飲食衣服澡沐資養種種治事。終歸磨滅。破散之法, T1538.528b03-18. This is the only passage in the text where the term *rūpakāya* occurs, however; a fact which is especially suspicious given the fact that the term *rūpakāya* otherwise never appears predicated of a Buddha before *Vibh* itself, and then, only in Buddhavarman/Daotai (once) and in Xuanzang (once). It is difficult to avoid the impression that the *term* entered the texts, even in contexts where it had previously been absent, quite late, and that these few instances cannot be safely taken as reflecting anything about Sarvâstivāda Abhidharma doctrine much earlier than the translations in which they appear. We will return to this problem below. In dealing with the *Prajñapti-śāstra,* we must bear in mind that although the text itself seems to fall quite early in our overall rough relative chronology, the only extant translation is very late, by *Dharmapāla/Dharmarakṣa of the Song.

[2040] We must bear in mind, of course, that to some extent the absence of the problematic of embodiment from some of these texts could be a reflection of their special topics, and that we must therefore be cautious, as always, of concluding too much from their silence.

contexts the marks are ascribed to the "Buddha" or "Tathāgata" (as opposed e.g. to the *bodhisattva*), but even the word "body" is not mentioned.[2041]

Just because the term *rūpakāya* is absent from the earlier texts does not mean that we can conclude, on the basis of the study above, that "the" Sarvâstivāda Abhidharma teaches a two-body theory all the same, merely replacing the term "body of birth" for the *rūpakāya* of previous characterisations. The term body of birth" (*shengshen* 生身, **sāṃbhavikakāya*), and therefore likewise[2042] the term "body born of father and mother" (*fumushengshen* 父母生身, **mātṛpitṛsaṃbhavakāya*), is in fact entirely absent in all texts prior to *Vibh* itself.[2043] Even in that case, as we shall see when we compare the various translations in more detail below, it seems that these terms creep in gradually, "body of birth" being found only twice, and "body born of father and mother" never, in Saṃghabhūti, and "body of birth" only being first found therefore in Buddhavarman.

Similarly, the term *dharmakāya* itself is entirely unknown prior to *Vibh* in this corpus, even in JñP. Thus, effectively, not just one but both of the component members of the supposedly standard Sarvâstivāda Abhidharma two-body model are almost entirely absent prior to *Vibh,* which in fact we might more accurately describe as a "post-canonical" text in that context,

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[2041] T1538.516c11-14, 520c13.

[2042] Because it includes in Chinese the combination *shengshen*: *fumushengshen*.

[2043] Note the partial exception of the *Prajñaptiśāstra* passage cited at 2039, which clearly evokes the DN 2 pericope describing the fleshly body from which I have suggested the notion of the "body born of father and mother" is drawn. However, in light of the likelihood that this is the very source of the concept and that the text repeats that source in such detail, it is probably more significant that it omits to speak of "the *body born* of father and mother", thus not in fact matching the later terminology, than that it cites the passage that happens to be the source of that later notion. Were the text aware of "the body born of father and mother" as a concept in its own right, we would expect it to certainly use it in this context.

constituting as it does the first major commentarial work on one of the seven texts in the fundamental canon.

Even when we step away from the special terms that dominate the discussion in the later literature, we find that these earlier texts are remarkably uninterested in the Buddha's bodies in general. With very few exceptions, we do not find even the most general terms "body of the Buddha" or "body of the Tathāgata". The only exceptions I can find to this generalisation are: one passage in which the *Dharmaskandha* discusses harming the "body of the Buddha" in the context of the five *anantarya* sins;[2044] a similar passage in *Vijñānakāya;*[2045] another in the *Prajñaptiśāstra,* as already mentioned.[2046]

Of the extensive material relating to the problematic of the Buddha's embodiments in *Vibh* examined above, therefore, this leaves us only with two sets of ideas which are most tangentially related to that problematic: the *anāsravaskandhas/aśaikṣaskandhas,* and the corporeal interpretation of *sôpadhiśeṣa-* and *nirupadhiśeṣanirvāṇadhātu*.

The *anāsravaskandhas/aśaikṣaskandhas* do appear in parts of this corpus, though they are never directly discussed in terms of a corporeal conceit or related to the problematic of the Buddha's embodiment(s) *per se*. The *Saṃgītiparyāya* seems to know only a fourfold schema of the

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[2044] 出佛身血, T1537.502b22.

[2045] The text considers a person who wilfully sets out to harm or kill the Tathāgata, where it states, "But in the very nature of things (法爾, **dharmatayā*?), it is not possible to harm the vitality of the Tathāgatas; it is only possible to draw the blood of a Tathāgata with violent and vicious intent," 然諸如來。法爾無有能害命者。唯可有能以勃惡心出如來血, T1539.587b14-16. For *faer* as *dharmatā,* see 法爾 for *dharmatā* in Xuanzang's YBh, see Yokoyama s.v. *chos nyid*; also s.v. *chos nyid kyis,* not corresponding to any extant Skt.; where *chos nyid kyis* does correspond to extant Skt., Xuanzang has rather 由法爾.

[2046] See n. 2039.

anāsravaskandha, which, like *Vibh,* it calls rather *aśaikṣa.*[2047] The *Dharmaskandha* knows the fivefold schema of **anāsravaskandha,* but these are discussed without being called *skandha;* in only one passage, they are considered in both *śaikṣa* and *aśaikṣa* varieties, and never in the *aśaikṣa* sense alone; they are never called *anāsrava;* and they are not especially related to the problematic of embodiment in any sense.[2048] Otherwise, however, this rubric does not appear in the other texts prior to JñP.[2049]

Sôpadhiśeṣa- and *nirupadhiśeṣanirvāṇadhātu* are simply not discussed in this corpus prior to JñP.

We have already seen, in the course of the discussion so far, that JñP is no more interested in the overt discussion of the problematic of the Buddha's embodiments than its predecessors, at least insofar as such interest is expressed in the use of the word "body" and special terms for kinds of bodies. This being the case, we only have a couple of scant signs, even in JñP, of the explosion of interest in this problem that is to erupt into *Vibh.*

First, we already find the definition of the Buddha refuge in terms of the *aśaikṣadharmas* that comprise *bodhi*, but without the explicit use of the term *dharmakāya.*[2050] The text also knows the five pure aggregates, which it calls *aśaikṣaskandhas*, and gives quite a detailed definition of them,

[2047] T1536.394b16-29.

[2048] T1537.463a10-12, 464a08-14, 493a02-03.

[2049] The *Vijñānakāya* discusses aspects of the category of *aśaikṣa* quite extensively in places, but it does not mention the *anāsravaskandha.*

[2050] In XZ, T1544.924c15-17. Cited above n. 2018. On Saṃghadeva/Fonian, we only see the very rudiments of this definition, 佛者彼覺行歸趣無學法, T1543.779a10.

without, however, equating them with the *dharmakāya* or relating them to a corporeal conceit.[2051]

We have also already seen above that JñP contains a key passage on the difference between *sôpadhiśeṣa-* and *nirupadhiśeṣanirvāṇadhātu*, in commenting upon which *Vibh* invokes the concepts of both *rūpakāya* and the "body of birth".[2052] This same passage is already contained in the earlier Saṃghadeva/Fonian (383 C.E.) translation of JñP.[2053] However, it may be significant that in Saṃghadeva/Fonian, the discussion is not framed explicitly in terms of the "body" at all; the text rather speaks simply of "the four gross [elements]" and "the five sense-organs". In Xuanzang's translation of JñP, by contrast, the five sense-organs have become "the body of the five sense-organs" (**pañcêndriyakāya*). Even in Xuanzang's JñP, however, neither of the terms *rūpakāya* and "body of birth" appear; this step is only taken in *Vibh.*

This, then, in sum, is all the evidence for precedents to the *Vibh* doctrines regarding the embodiments of the Buddha prior to *Vibh.*[2054] This is certainly remarkable. It means that the extensive and rich ideas about the Buddha's embodiments that we find in *Vibh,* far from representing a Sarvâstivāda common heritage that was known from time immemorial, can be

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[2051] In Saṃghadeva/Fonian, T1543.777b04-07 and 778a26-b10; in XZ, T1544.923c25-924a07.

[2052] See §4.4.6. JñP reference given above at n. 1864. The JñP root passage comprises three paragraphs of my extended translation given above, marked in bold: see p. 875, 876 once more, and 879 respectively.

[2053] T1543.777c14-22. It is worth noting that despite the absence of the word "body", the doctrine of *sôpadhiśeṣa-* and *nirupadhiśeṣanirvāṇadhātu* here is clearly in line with the "corporeal" interpretation, in a period when, as we saw at the end of Chapter 3, this interpretation is still relatively thinly attested in the Chinese canon.

[2054] It is of passing, though predominantly negative, interest that the text already contains the passage noted above, in our discussion of la Vallée Poussin's contention that *Vibh* recognises a *nirmāṇakāya* of the Buddha, considering how it is that the Buddha manages to elaborate a "magical person" such that when he talks, it is silent and vice versa; the term used here, however, is "magical person" (化人, **nirmāṇapuruṣa*?) and not *nirmāṇakāya;* T1538.526a08-20.

specifically dated (at least relatively speaking) almost in their entirety to *Vibh* itself. For the larger history of Buddha-body doctrine, therefore, much turns out to hinge on how we date these ideas as they appear in *Vibh* (if, indeed, we can date them with any accuracy at all!). It is certainly worth our while to ask, therefore, to what extent the ideas we have studied here are already present in earlier Chinese versions of *Vibh* itself. When we do so, as we will now see, we do indeed find that right from the first translation by Saṃghabhūti, the text was vastly more interested in various dimensions of this problematic than its predecessors. We also find many variations from the Xuanzang version of *Vibh,* and also some confirmations of the picture of the text we derived from that translation.[2055]

Turning first to the first translation of *Vibh* in 383 by Saṃghabhūti (T1547), it is noteworthy that this text, also, never uses the term *rūpakāya.* This is in stark contrast, however, to some other terms for the bodies of the Buddha.

In contrast to earlier texts (with the exception of the *Prakaraṇapāda*), Saṃghabhūti's text does mention the thirty-two marks and other distinguishing features of the Buddha's physical body (in fact, oddly enough, there are slightly *more* passages that mention this doctrine here than in the later and larger Buddhavarman). In these contexts, however, it is once unclear in exactly what status the Buddha has these marks predicated of him;[2056] once he is only spoken of as a "prince of the Śākyas" etc. (referring to the time of his birth);[2057] once he is called "the

[2055] We must remember that the correspondence between versions can at best only be partial, since the earlier versions themselves (especially the first Saṃghabhūti translation) must be partial given their size. In making the comparison between versions, therefore, we must be mindful that arguments from silence, especially, are therefore very weak.

[2056] T1547.416a08.

[2057] T1547.440b23-25.

bodhisattva";[2058] and one passage clearly speaks of him in his status as Buddha, though he is not named as such.[2059] Reference is made, in some of these passages only, to his "body", but this body is, as in the Xuanzang, never named as a specific type of body. In one passage, already, the otherwise anomalous term "great body" (**mahākāya*) is used, in explaining that the Buddha's compassion is called *mahākaruṇā* because it takes that body as its support.[2060]

Saṃghabhūti's *Vibh* never mentions the "body born of father and mother". It *does,* however, use the term "body of birth", in two places; and as in Xuanzang's version, this body is opposed to *dharmakāya.* First, this opposition appears in the Saṃghabhūti version of the controversy with the Mahāsāṃghika already studied above,[2061] which discusses the question of whether the Buddha's body is pure (or impure (tainted/taintless, with/out outflows, *sa-/an-āsrava*), and how to interpret the passage cited by Mahāsāṃghika as authority for their position that it is taintless. Like the later *Vibh,* the Saṃghabhūti version already explains this scriptural passage by saying that the reference to dwelling in the world refers to the "body of birth", but the claim that the Buddha is not affected by worldly *dharmas* refers to the *dharmakāya.*[2062] The text also contrasts "the body of birth" (in a sense which is a little unclear) and the *dharmakāya* in a version of the passage already studied above[2063] stating that the *dharmakāya* is always "clothed" (here, "never reveals itself") as part of the explanation of the claim that beings in higher

[2058] T1547.517c19-21.

[2059] T1547.496b13-21.

[2060] T1547.496b13-21.

[2061] See p. 855 above.

[2062] 問曰。若佛身一向有漏者。此鞞婆闍婆提契經云何通。答曰。彼契經因法身故說。如來生世間長世間者。此說生身不著世間法行。如來無所著等正覺出一切世間上者。此說法身, T1547.463b06-10. This passage is also found in Buddhavarman/Daotai, T1546.176a24-b13.

[2063] See above p. 855.

heavens, (some) *bodhisattvas,* and the nun Śuklā are always clothed. In Saṃghabhūti, however, this passage features some variations from the Xuanzang version.[2064]

In other connections, also, the Saṃghabhūti version of the text mentions *dharmakāya* alone, and on the whole, its discussion of this concept is quite extensive, by contrast to the texts that precede it. For example, it contains a rudimentary version of the passage that discusses "damaging" the *dharmakāya* in the manner that the physical body is damaged by being stabbed with a dagger.[2065] It also contains the passage arguing about whether the ear plays a particular role in "guiding" the *dharmakāya,* though the wording here reads more as if the ear acts as a condition for the growth and thriving of the *dharmakāya.*[2066] It also features the passage saying that the four *dhyānas* are a "food" because they nurture or sustain the *dharmakāya.*[2067]

The Saṃghabhūti *Vibh* also contains some passages that use the term *dharmakāya* in contexts or manners where it is *not* found in Xuanzang's version.

[2064] T1547.518b25-c13. Here, there is no talk about "shame" or "modesty", and the text simply states that "all the gods of the *kāmadhātu* are clothed, because, just as the *dharmakāya* does not show itself (lit. 'reveal its form'), [their?] 'body of birth' also does not" (如法身不裸形。生身亦爾). Note that the term "body of birth" is used in a manner that has no obvious connection to the Buddha, a fact which makes us wonder what exactly might be intended by the term *dharmakāya* here. This passage is also found in Buddhavarman/Daotai, T1546.267c25-p.268a11.

[2065] Much is missing in comparison with Xuanzang's version of the same passage: here we read only 如利刺極入身中能壞身。如此受利刺極入法中能壞法身, T1547.429a20-22, and note, in particular, that it is not made explicit that this is a metaphor, or that what is at stake is the defilements attacking the *dharmakāya like* a dagger attacking the physical body. This passage is also found in Buddhavarman/Daotai, T1546.193a15-16. For Xuanzang, see n. 1964.

[2066] T1547.442a18-29. For XZ, see above n. 1852. This passage is also found in Buddhavarman/Daotai, where the wording differs again, and the text speaks of the ear "protecting" the *dharmakāya* and the eye the "body of birth", 1546.273a08-19.

[2067] T1547.486c27-487a01. Also found in Buddhavarman/Daotai, T1546.314a27-b01. For XZ, mentioned briefly above, see n. 1965.

For example, one passage compares the Buddha to a dragon-king who, "after long nurturing his body in the sea" (海中長養身已), rises into the air and covers the sky with clouds, making lightning flash and thunder crash to announce, "I am about to make it rain." In just this manner, the Buddha, after "long nurturing his *dharmakāya*" (長養法身) through the ages of all the past Buddhas, "rises into the air on the vehicle of his great compassion, covers the world with the clouds of his great mercy, lets flash the lightning of his wisdom and lets resound the thunder of his great Dharma-voice" etc.[2068] When we turn to the Buddhavarman version of the text, in which the passage is also found, we find what is in a sense an even more interesting variation, in that for the term *dharmakāya* we find substituted *zhishen* 智身, **jñānakāya* or "body of special knowledge/gnosis".[2069] The implicit equivalence thus drawn between the *dharmakāya* and a body of *jñāna* puts us in mind of the model of the Buddha embodied in his *sarvajñatājñāna* in Lokakṣema's *Aṣṭa*,[2070] and clearly suggests, once more, the centrality of embodiment in gnosis to conceptions of the Buddha's most veritable embodiment. In the corresponding passage in Xuanzang, the *dharmakāya* is not mentioned (and neither is the body of the Dragon-king), though the correspondence is moderately close in most other details.[2071]

Elsewhere, Saṃghabhūti's translation records one interpretation of a scripture passage in which it is said that Brahmans of other schools have three truths, and that the three truths in question are a "tripartite *dharmakāya*" comprising a *śīlaskandha,* a *samādhiskandha,* and a

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[2068] 以大悲乘虛空。以大慈雲覆陰世間。放智電光震大法音 etc., T1547.448a18-b03.

[2069] T1546.278c17-279a01.

[2070] See above §4.3.2 ff.

[2071] T1545.366b23-c09. A detail found in Xuanzang that is not found in Saṃghabhūti is that text describes the Buddha rising into the metaphorical skies as "rising into the realm of *nirvāṇa* with a remainder of support" 昇有餘依涅槃空界。興大悲雲遍覆世間, T1545.366c05-06; so too the Buddhavarman/Daotai version, 上昇有餘涅槃虛空界中, T1546.278c25.

jñānaskandha, which however are each glossed in unique terms suggested adaptation to fit the teachings of these non-Buddhist groups.[2072]

Finally, and perhaps most significantly, Saṃghabhūti's version of the text contains a passage not found in other versions of the text that discusses the *dharmakāya* in terms that clearly have to do with the teaching, and indeed, even with the literary form of the texts (without obvious prejudice as to whether those texts are oral or written).[2073]

> "The scriptures of the Buddha speak of 'the eighty-thousand-fold *dharmakāya*'. What then is the enumeration that delimits the extent of this *dharmakāya*? One theory holds that each scripture (*jing, sūtra*) counts as one *dharmakāya,* and this is what is meant by an enumeration that delimits a single *dharmakāya* [i.e., this is the definition of '*dharmakāya*' as a unit of measure]; in this manner, one arrives at eighty thousand in all. There is another theory that holds that [one?] foundationof mindfulness (意止, *smṛtyupasthāna*) counts as one *dharmakāya*, and so, also, for [each of] the [four] [correct] endeavours (*prahāṇa*), the [four] supernatural powers (*ṛddhipāda*)*,* the [five] faculties (*indriya*), the [five] powers (*bala*), the [seven] members of enlightenment (*bodhiyaṇga*) and the [eight members of the eightfold] path[2074] – each of these, too, counts as one *dharmakāya*,[2075] and thus (?) in all it comes to eighty thousand.[2076]

[2072] 或曰。此中說三分法身戒身定身慧身。彼不害一切衆生者是戒身。我不爲他他不爲我者是定身。諸所習法皆是盡法者是慧身, T1547.472c11-14.

[2073] This passage is discussed briefly and translated in Guang Xing, *Concept of the Buddha* 36. Guang's translation, however, is unreliable.

[2074] The syntax seems somewhat garbled here. It is clear, nonetheless, that the operative rubric is the thirty-seven "members of enlightenment" (*bodhipakṣikadharmāḥ*) from the occurrence elsewhere in the text of the phrase 四意止[var. 四]意斷神足根力覺道 (e.g. T1547.485b02, T1547.485a05), corresponding in Xuanzang to 四念住四正斷四神足五根五力七等覺支八聖道. The text reads 謂契經說。意止此是一法身齊限數。如是契經說。意斷神足根力覺種道種。是謂一法身齊限數, which we might speculate reflects a fairly direct or literal translation of a Sanskrit word order (e.g. roughly **sūtre uktaṃ smṛtyupasthāṇam etad ekadharmakāyasya gaṇas, tathâpi sūtre uktā prahāṇarddhipādêndriyabalabodhyaṇgamargādaya eva ekadharmakāyasya gaṇāḥ*[?]). Note that this means Guang Xing is mistaken in his translation of these terms; *Concept of the Buddha* 36; he translates 意止, in particular, "mental concentration", and interprets it as a general class to which the remaining items belong. On this rubric, see AK 6.66-73, VP IV, 280-292.

[2075] Given the frequent identification elsewhere of the Buddha's gnosis, or of *bodhi* more particularly, as the *dharmakāya,* it seems logical enough that the *bodhipakṣikadharmas* would be identified as the *dharmakāya,* and indeed, it is perhaps surprising that this move is not made more frequently. Perhaps this move is so rare because the *bodhipakṣikadharmas* are merely accompaniments of *bodhi* – conditions that prepare the way for it, or its (in some cases, almost incidental) consequences – rather than being constitutive of it?

> "But the reckoners (算者) say: Eight syllables (字) make a 'foot' (句, certainly for *pada/pāda*); thirty-two syllables make a *śloka* (首盧), and thus
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> Five hundred thousand, and five thousand again –
> Five hundred and five thousand
> Is the measure of one *dharmakāya*."[2077]

This notion of the *dharmakāya* is significant primarily because it is so unique in the entire Sarvâstivāda Abhidharma corpus, from its genesis through to all three *Vibhāṣā* texts. Obviously, since the very notion of the *dharmakāya* is never discussed prior to *Vibh* itself, this interpretation of it is unprecedented in the Sarvâstivāda Abhidharma canon. Perhaps even more significantly, however,[2078] this same concept disappears from *Vibh* itself after Saṃghabhūti's version; not merely is the passage itself not found in the later versions, but nothing like its understanding of the *dharmakāya* appears later either. This is surely very clear evidence that the doctrines of the Buddha's bodies were amenable to significant development and mutation over time, even within the confines of what we might loosely consider the very same text.

Immediately after the passage just translated, the text goes on to explain two different theories of why the word *kāya* (身) is applied to the *dharmakāya* so defined. In each case, it is because it is possible to subsume the *dharma* so labelled to a rubric of the five *skandhas*. In the first explanation, which contains the only ideas we have not already met with elsewhere, the Buddha's word (佛語, **buddhavācana*) considered from the perspective of its nature as a verbal

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2076 The logic whereby the *bodhipakṣikadharmas* go from being thirty-seven in number to suddenly totalling eighty thousand escapes me.

2077 T1547.459a16-24.

2078 We will discuss below the complexities of the relations between the various *Vibh* texts, and the limits they place on these sorts of conclusions about the significance of differences between them.

teaching (教性, **deśanatvāt*?) falls under the *rūpaskandha*,[2079] whereas considered from the perspective of its nature as ideas (名性, **nāmatvāt*?) it falls under the *saṃskāraskandha*.

The second explanation for calling this a "*dharma* body" is also significant. We have already seen above that while the *Saṃgītaparyāya* knows an apparently earlier fourfold scheme of the pure aggregates, and the *Dharmaskandha* knows all five, it is not until JñP that we find this schema linked to the Buddha, and even then, it is not done in a way that clearly relates to the problematic of embodiment. Here, for the first time, we see, if still somewhat unclearly, an understanding of the five pure aggregates as the *dharmakāya*. In the second explanation, reference is made, rather than to the *dharmakāya* comprised by texts, rather to the [*dharma*?-] body comprised by the five *pure* aggregates (*anāsrava/aśaikṣaskandha,* here called, in a somewhat redundant manner that seems especially to emphasise the corporeal conceit, 五陰身), the components of which are listed[2080] and then similarly subsumed to the ordinary five *skandhas,* thereby once again justifying the use of the term *dharmakāya.*[2081] We should note, however, that in this context, the pure aggregates are referred to as neither *anāsrava* nor *aśaikṣa*.

Apart from the passages already examined above, there are few other passages discussing the Buddha's embodiments, but still, these passages too represent a marked increase in this problem over earlier texts in the Sarvâstivāda Abhidharma canon. Thus, Saṃghabhūti also already contains the passage explaining that the Buddha chose to be "womb-born" rather than

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[2079] Presumably, in virtue of its nature as sound.

[2080] 戒身定身慧身解脫身解脫知見身.

[2081] T1547.459a27-b06. The key portion of the passage reads 謂餘五陰身。戒身定身慧身解脫身解脫知見身。問曰。如此餘五陰身。何以故。立五陰。答曰。彼亦盡入中。戒身入色陰中。餘者入行陰中。以是故佛契經說五陰 etc. We have already encountered the reduction of the five pure aggregates to the ordinary *skandhas* in this fashion in the context of AKBh 1.27, VP I, 48; see above n. 2010.

"born by metamorphosis" in part because he wanted to be sure he would leave relics.[2082] It also contains the apparently anomalous reference to a "great body" to explain why the Buddha's compassion is called "great" (*mahākaruṇā*).[2083] It also contains, as we have already noted above, a simpler version of the the passage discussing whether or not it is possible to contemplate impurity using the body of the Buddha as an object.[2084]

The only place where the text discusses the five pure aggregates is in the passage just noted, wherein they feature as part of the discussion of the *dharmakāya*.

Finally, though it does not relate this understanding to any of its terms for or doctrines of the Buddha's bodies, it is worth noting that the text clearly knows the corporeal reading of *sôpadhiśeṣa-* and *nirupadhiśeṣanirvāṇadhātu*. One passage speaks of *abandoning* the *sôpadhiśeṣanirvānadhātu* in order to enter into *parinirvāṇa* in the *nirupadhiśeṣanirvānadhātu.*[2085] Elsewhere, the text also speaks of the Arhat's *skandhas* being extinguished and him thereupon entering into the *nirupadhiśeṣanirvāṇadhātu*.[2086] It is perhaps notable, however,[2087] that the Saṃghabhūti does not contain an analogue to the passage studied above from Xuanzang's translation, which considers the difference between the two kinds of *nirvāṇadhātu* at such length.

[2082] T1547.522c17-18, 523a13-20. Also in Buddhavarman/Daotai, T1546.83a21-b01. For this passage in XZ *Vibh,* see n. 1848.

[2083] 或曰。生大身故名大悲 etc., T1547.496b17-21. For the Xuanzang, see above n. 1836.

[2084] T1547.504c27-505a11. See above n. 1830 for some discussion of the difference between the two versions of this passage.

[2085] 捨有餘涅槃界。入無餘涅槃界而般涅槃, T1547.518c09-10.

[2086] 阿羅漢盡滅陰入無餘涅槃界, T1547.425c07-08.

[2087] Remembering the special dangers of argument from silence in this case: see n. 2055.

Saṃghabhūti's version of *Vibh* thus already contains very much that is new in Sarvâstivāda Abhidharma doctrines of the Buddha's embodiments against the background of the canonical seven texts up to JñP. In particular, it seems that a host of new ideas about the *dharmakāya* have suddenly burst upon the scene, without, for all that, being articulated so often and so clearly in opposition to the "body of birth" as they are in Xuanzang's version.

When we turn to the slightly later (and much larger) version of the text by Buddhavarman and Daotai, we find (unsurprisingly, given that the translation is much fuller) a further increase in these ideas again. We have already noted above, through the discussion of the Saṃghabhūti version of the text, where the Buddhavarman version (T1546) also contains passages shared between Saṃghabhūti and Xuanzang, and given that the common presence of such passages in the Buddhavarman version, also, adds little to our picture of the overall historical development of the text, we will not repeat that discussion here, but will rather confine ourselves to new information not found in Saṃghabhūti.

First, it is notable that the text does once use the term *rūpakāya* in connection to the Buddha,[2088] but in a context unique to this version of the text. In discussing the reasons that the earth goddess knew that the Buddha was turning the wheel of *dharma,* when she was not possessed of the necessary special knowledge to perceive the fact, the text says that the Buddha told others this was what he was doing, and that he did so because (among several other reasons) he "wanted to manifest the *rūpakāya* as a field of merit (*puṇyakṣetra*) for the world" (or "show *that*

[2088] Elsewhere, the text also mentions briefly the understanding of *rūpakāya* that we saw is more usual in the Xuanzang version, whereby it is a regular possibility of rebirth for beings in the *kāmadhātu* and *rūpadhātu* vs. the **arūpyakāya* of the *arūpyadhātu*; 1546.290b12-14. However, this understanding is also noticeably missing in the text, as in all prior texts with the slight exceptions of the *Saṃgītiparyāya* and the *Dharmaskandha.*

the *rūpakāya* was a field of merit of the world/show the world that the *rūpakāya* was a field of merit" 欲現色身爲世福田).[2089]

Like the Saṃghabhūti, the Buddhavarman version of the text mentions the thirty-two marks etc. of the Buddha in a few places, but never calls it a body of one kind or another; rather, it simply speaks of the "body".[2090]

The term "body of birth" is used by the Buddhavarman version of the text in its version of the passage studied in detail above outlining the corporeal understanding of the distinction between *sôpadhiśeṣa-* and *nirupadhiśeṣanirvāṇadhātu,* and the controversies that attended that notion.[2091] We will return to the more detailed consideration of the comparison between the Buddhavarman and Xuanzang versions of these passages immediately below. The text also uses the term "body of birth" in its version of the passage in which the Buddha bests the strongmen, and the more general discussion of his physical strength occasioned thereby, with the comparison of that strength to his powers of mind. In this context, as in Xuanzang, it is stated that the "body of birth" weakens with age after the Buddha passes his prime, but not the *dharmakāya*.[2092] Otherwise, the passages in which the text uses the term "body of birth" are all already present in Saṃghabhūti.

[2089] T1546.157c17-23. In the Xuanzang, the term *rūpakāya* is lacking: 亦示世間良福田。故告他令知, T1545.210c02-03. This passage puzzles me a little, as I am not sure how this goal would be served by preaching a sermon. Perhaps, had he not preached, nobody would know that this was a being whose *rūpakāya* was such a *puṇyakṣetra*?

[2090] Note also it speaks of the Buddha in his status as *bodhisattva* or as prince of the Śākyas, but nowhere explicitly states that the Buddha (or a Buddha) has these marks etc. T1546.267b28-c02; 271c22-24; 322a04-08.

[2091] T1546.126a08-c16.

[2092] T1546.119c24. See further n. 2093.

The term "body born of father and mother" appears in the Buddhavarman *Vibh* for the first time in the entire Sarvâstivāda Abhidharma corpus, though in only two passages. The first such passage is the discussion of the Buddha's prodigious physical strength already studied above in the Xuanzang version, where this prodigious strength is ascribed to this body (父母生身, 父母所生).[2093] The second is the passage discussing the Buddha-refuge, also studied above in the Xuanzang version, which ridicules the idea that one would take refuge in parts of "the body born of mother and father", viz. "head, feet, etc." (in this version), and says that one takes refuge rather in the Buddha's *bodhi,* i.e. the *aśaikṣadharmas* (若歸趣佛者。當歸趣佛菩提。無學法者; notably not using the term *dharmakāya* as the Xuanzang version does).[2094] It may be significant that the term "body born of father and mother" thus first appears in Buddhavarman in the Sarvâstivāda Abhidharma corpus, a possibility we will discuss further when exploring the date and provenance of the concept of *rūpakāya* below.

We also find some passages mentioning *dharmakāya* shared between Buddhavarman and Xuanzang, which were not yet found in Saṃghabhūti. We have already seen that it poses the contrast between the strength of the body of birth and the powers of the *dharmakāya* in the passage where the Buddha bests the strongmen.[2095] The Buddhavarman also contains the

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[2093] T1546.119c01-120a19; see also T1546.104a01-03; for the Xuanzang version, see above n. 1879. As in the Xuanzang, so here, too, the text opposes to this "strength of the body" the Buddha's "mental powers" (已說如來身力。今當說意力, 120a20, for which in Xuanzang see above n. 1971, fifth paragraph), under which latter rubric it discusses the eighteen *āveṇikadharmas* with the "ten powers" (which we recall are ten kinds of special knowledge, *jñāna*) foremost among them. In this context, also like Xuanzang, the text opposes the strength of the body of birth, which wanes, to the strength of the *dharmakāya;* for which, in Xuanzang, see above n. 1850.

[2094] T1546.134b01-03. For the Xuanzang, see above n. 1871 and the paragraph in text to which that note is appended; and n. 1996.

[2095] See n. 2092.

passage already studied above, stating that in certain circumstances it is possible to have a nascent *dharmakāya* that is not yet fully grown, which is compared to a tiger cub.[2096] It also contains the passage stating that the Buddhas are equal in respect of the *dharmakāya,* and defining it in terms of the eighteen *āveṇikadharmas*.[2097]

As we have already seen above, the Buddhavarman version of the text contains the passage comparing the Buddha to the dragon-king who makes the rain. In this version of the text, however, where the Saṃghabhūti speaks of the Buddha nurturing his *dharmakāya* through the countless aeons of his prior *bodhisattva* existences, Buddhavarman speaks of nurturing the **jñānakāya.*[2098]

The Buddhavarman version of the text certainly knows the fivefold rubric of *anāsrava-/aśaikṣa-skandhas,* which it calls "bodies" (*shen* 身).[2099] However, this rubric does not seem to be directly associated with the *dharmakāya* anywhere in the text.

We have already seen immediately above, in discussing the use of the term "body of birth" in the text, that it contains the passage using that term in the exegesis of *sôpadhiśeṣa-* and *anupadhiśeṣanirvāṇadhātu*, which of course means that the text also contains the corporeal reading of those terms. In fact, as we already noted above, one of the most significant

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[2096] T1546.10a21-27. Parallel in Xuanzang cited above n. 1961.

[2097] T1546.70c29-71a20. For the Xuanzang, see above, §4.4.8, esp. n. 1968-1971. The wording of the eighteen *āveṇikadharmas* list is somewhat garbled here too: 如一佛成就力無畏大悲三不共念處諸佛亦爾, which makes it look as if only the three foundations of mindfulness are "*āveṇika*", and which does not mention the number eighteen (nor the number ten for the powers).

[2098] See above n. 2069.

[2099] See e.g. the long discussion at T1546.129c19-131a12.

differences between the two versions of the text is that Buddhavarman translate the very *terms* here as "the *nirvāṇadhātu* with /out a vestigial *body*".[2100] Other detailed discrepancies between the Buddhavarman and Xuanzang versions of the text have already been noted in the footnotes to my translation above.[2101] In many respects, however, despite significant variations, it is notable that Buddhavarman matches Xuanzang so closely, including the fact that it already records the bulk of the controversies that surround the topic.[2102]

Thus, in sum, many of the *Vibh* ideas about the Buddha's embodiments studied in the context of the Xuanzang version above are already present in one or the other of the earlier translations, and can thus be dated to the second half of the fourth century or the very early fifth century at the latest. However, we must also consider, of course, those passages that only appear in the Xuanzang version of the text, in order to assess the extent to which fresh ideas about the Buddha's embodiments continued to enter the text even after the early fifth century.

Thus, so far as I could determine, the following contents are unique to Xuanzang: over a dozen mentions of the Buddha's body in the context of an extended discussion of the thirty-two marks;[2103] the discussion of marks and *anuttarasaṃyaksaṃbodhi* as conditions of Buddhahood in relation to the Buddha's prophecy of Maitreya's future Buddhahood;[2104] Māra adopts a Buddha-body for Upagupta;[2105] how the Buddha won the hide-and-seek contest with the Brahma king;[2106]

[2100] See n. 1867.

[2101] See n. 1867, 1905, 1909, 1911, 1912, 1914, 1916, 1918, 1919, 1920, 1923, 1924, 1921, 1925, 1928, 1929.

[2102] See n. 1937-1939 above.

[2103] See n. 1835.

[2104] See also n. 1835.

[2105] Passage cited above at n. 1837.

Cuṇḍa sees the Buddha's body is weak just before the *parinirvāṇa*;[2107] the Buddha's great compassion is based upon his body, where ordinary compassion is based upon the body of an ordinary sentient being;[2108] the Buddha's funeral pyre was extinguished with milk because his body of birth was nourished on milk;[2109] the Buddha cannot receive *dharma*-offerings from others because his *dharmakāya* is already perfect;[2110] breaking the *saṃgha* is an *anantarya* sin because it is an attack on the *dharmakāya*;[2111] exegesis of the two verbs of sight in the MPNS tradition of the Buddha's last display of his body in terms of "body of birth" and *dharmakāya*;[2112] two senses in which the Buddha is *lokôttara* explained in terms of "body of birth" and *dharmakāya,* and the life of the ordinary monk parsed in terms of "cultivation" of each of these Buddha-bodies;[2113] it is an *anantarya* sin to harm the Buddha's body, even though he is not truly that body, because to harm the basis harms what is based upon it, viz. the *dharmakāya,* as breaking a bottle also leads to the loss of the milk it contains.[2114]

2106 Passage cited above at n. 1841. As noted there, the general context is present in Buddhavarman, but not the speculation on the transformation of the body.

2107 Passage cited above at n. 1843.

2108 Passage cited above at n. 1845. The discussion of great compassion in general here, which is part of the extended exegesis of the eighteen *āveṇikadharmas* (without that name), is much truncated in comparison to Xuanzang: T1546.121b09-16.

2109 Passage cited above at n. 1847.

2110 Passage cited above at n. 1849.

2111 Passage cited above at n. 1851.

2112 Passage cited above at n. 1855.

2113 Passage cited above at n. 1867.

2114 Passage cited above at n. 1959.

In considering the significance of these differences between the doctrines of embodiments found in these various *Vibhāṣā,* however, we have to remember that we are contending with various complications of textual history.

First, as we noted above, although the three extant *Vibhāṣā* clearly share much material, they may not for all that be versions of quite "the same" text, but rather could equally be common exemplars of the same genre, all alike being further related as commentaries on the same root text (JñP). This means that the presence or absence of material could be a reflection of deliberate authorial choices backed by a considered doctrinal stance, and not merely evidence that absent ideas were unknown at the time of a text's authorship. Against this consideration, however, Willemen, Dessein and Cox report, on the basis of previous scholarship, that comparison of the Buddhavarman and Xuanzang versions of the text with a Sanskrit fragment in the Pelliot collection suggest that both are translations of the same basic text, and that with the Sanskrit, we have evidence of "at the very least, three distinction recensions of *a vibhāṣā*" (my emphasis).[2115] They further state that "the [Sanskrit] fragment represents a recension of *the vibhāṣā* [my emphasis] different from that represented by either Chinese translation, and . . . both of the Chinese translations represent *expanded, and possibly later versions of the text.*"[2116] Thus, it seems we are dealing with texts which, while they cannot be simply treated as variants of a single text, are nonetheless quite closely related.

Second, we have to bear in mind that, as discussed above, both of the earlier texts only correspond partially to Xuanzang as a whole, each in their own way, for various reasons extrinsic to any hypothetical process of accretional composition over time. The Saṃghabhūti

[2115] Willemen, Dessein and Cox 233-234.

[2116] Willemen, Dessein and Cox 233-234.

differs fundamentally in structure from the other two versions of the text, and comments only on two sections of the root text.[2117] The Buddhavarman version of the text was partially lost and restored, as we mentioned above, and we have only sixty fascicles of a text that was reportedly originally a hundred fascicles; Willemen, Dessein and Cox report that the surviving text comments only on the first three of eight chapters of JñP.[2118] Depending upon their distribution, therefore, passages found in Xuanzang but missing from either of the other *Vibhāṣā* could either reflect mere differences in the structure and vicissitudes of the various versions.

Third, we have to bear in mind the additional possibility that even insofar as these extant *Vibhāṣā* may represent roughly the same text and we might be able to establish in dealing with an individual passage that it is not part of the text excluded by the structure of the Saṃghabhūti or the vicissitudes of the Buddhavarman, the extant texts may represent different *recensions* of "the" text. Willemen, Dessein and Cox report that there seem to be at least three recensions represented by Saṃghabhūti, Sanskrit fragments, and Buddhavarman-Xuanzang respectively, and that the Buddhavarman and Xuanzang versions may further represent separate recensions again.[2119] Further, these differing recensions could very possibly reflect "multiple scholastic traditions of interpretation";[2120] Kawamura Kōshō has thus made various attempts to link the extant texts to different historical groups.[2121] Thus, it is also possible that passages might be found in Xuanzang and not in other texts because of differences in the

[2117] See above n. 1814.

[2118] See above n. 1815.

[2119] Willemen, Dessein and Cox 234.

[2120] Willemen, Dessein and Cox 235.

[2121] Summarized in Willemen, Dessein and Cox 235-237.

recension upon which each of the relevant extant Chinese translations were based, and those differences might be determined by different interpretative positions or transmission traditions.

As a first approximation, then, in sorting out the differences between these different possible reasons for discrepancies between our texts, we can safeguard against faulty arguments from the silence of Buddhavarman, where the absence of the material may in fact stem from losses of text in the political disturbances of 439, by excluding all passages that fall in the fourth chapter or later of Xuanzang.[2122] Of the fourteen passages listed above as occurring in Xuanzang and not Buddhavarman, nine can thus be eliminated as falling after the beginning of Chapter 4. However, this still leaves four passages which do fall in the parts of the Xuanzang text for which there exist analogues (comments on the same parts of JñP) in Buddhavarman: how the Buddha won the hide-and-seek contest with Brahmā; the Buddha's great compassion is based upon his body, where ordinary compassion is "based upon" the body of an ordinary sentient being; the Buddha cannot receive *dharma*-offerings from others because his *dharmakāya* is already perfect; two senses in which the Buddha is *lokôttara* explained in terms of "body of birth" and *dharmakāya,* and the life of the ordinary monk parsed in terms of "cultivation" of each of these Buddha-bodies. Indeed, as we saw in discussing each of these passages in turn,[2123] it turns out that in each case, the general context is in fact present in Buddhavarman just as it is in Xuanzang, so that we cannot blame the absence of the ideas about the embodiments of the Buddha on the loss Buddhavarman's text suffered in 439. In addition to these ideas about bodies that are not found in any text but Xuanzang, we have already noted above that in the context of the extended passage we studied in most detail, viz. the passage discussing the

[2122] In Xuanzang, the fourth chapter begins at T1545.578a14.

[2123] See n. 1841, 1845, 1849, 1867.

details of the corporeal model of *sôpadhiśeṣa-* and *nirupadhiśeṣanirvāṇadhātu*, there are numerous differences in detail, and a few significant differences in content, between the Xuanzang version and the earlier Buddhavarman version;[2124] among these differences are also differences in the body doctrine presented by the text.

Thus, not all the differences in body doctrine between Xuanzang's version of the text and the earlier Buddhavarman, at least, can be explained away merely by reference to the chance loss of part of the latter text. Given that the passages constituting the context for these ideas are also, as we have seen, indeed present in Buddhavarman, it also seems that, whether or not the texts as a whole are different exemplars of the same genre of commentary upon the same root text, the specific passages in question are certainly close enough to bear comparison. This means that two possible explanations are left to us for these remaining differences in the body doctrine of the two versions of the text. On the one hand, they could be reflections of recensional differences between the texts, and therefore of the doctrines of differing schools of interpretation and lineages of transmission within the Sarvâstivāda fold; or, on the other hand, they could also reflect the addition of ideas to the text between the era of the earlier texts and Xuanzang's era.

The latter possibility is supported to some extent by comparison between the Sanskrit fragment in the Pelliot collection, Buddhavarman and Xuanzang; these versions of the text "correspond closely" but also contain "some revealing differences", which show that "both Chinese translations include additional material, indicating . . . that both of the Chinese

[2124] For a summary list of the significant differences between the two versions of the text, see above p. 890. For details of these discrepancies, see the notes on the topic appended to my translation of the Xuanzang version; references to those notes are summarily listed at n. 2101 above.

translations represent expanded, and possibly later versions of the text."[2125] That the text continued to expand even after Buddhavarman would also seem to be suggested by the relative size of the two translations: even before the loss of some of the text, Buddhvarman's version was only ever a hundred fascicles, whereas Xuanzang is two hundred.[2126]

At best, then, consideration of the complex relations among the texts only allow us to eliminate some possible explanations for some of the discrepancies between the doctrine of bodies as it is found in Buddhavarman and Xuanzang, and cannot inform us certainly whether or not any of the ideas in the Xuanzang version of the text entered the text after the time of Buddhavarman. At the very least, however, those discrepancies that remained after we eliminated those parts of the text for which Buddhavarman does not exist, and consideration of the possible reasons for them, show that we cannot discount the possibility that the text was indeed still in some degree open and absorbing further elements after the time of Buddhavarman. But if this could have been the case between Buddhavarman and Xuanzang, we must also recognise that it could equally have been the case in the period before all of our Chinese translations, and this means that even those ideas about the bodies of the Buddha that are shared by Buddhavarman and Xuanzang, or even by all three *Vibhāṣā* texts, may not necessarily date back early enough to predate those Prajñāpāramitā ideas that also fit the label of "two-body" theory.

[2125] Willemen, Dessein and Cox 233-234.

[2126] For an opinion that the texts of the Sarvâstivāda Abhidharma corpus in general were probably subject to ongoing interpolation and growth over a long period, see Willemen, Dessein and Cox 167. For discussion of aspects of the *Dharmaskandha* that seem to reflect such ongoing growth and modification in the text in its details, see Frauwallner, *Studies in Abhidharma Literature* 20-21. For reasons to consider it likely that the *Prajñaptiśāstra* underwent significant modification over a long history, see Willemen, Dessein and Cox 191-193: "Yamada Ryūjō contends that the *Prajñaptiśāstra,* like other *sūtra* collections and Abhidharma texts, undoubtedly underwent expansion and restructuring over the centuries . . ." See also Willemen, Dessein and Cox 312 on a set of categories apparently added to the *Prakaraṇapāda* between the translation of Guṇabhadra and Bodhiyaśas and that of Xuanzang.

We have also seen above that very little of *Vibh*'s doctrine of Buddha bodies is found in the Sarvâstivāda Abhidharma canon prior to *Vibh,* even in JñP, the root text upon which *Vibh* comments. This means, by a process of elimination, that so far as our evidence can show us, these ideas first enter the Sarvâstivāda Abhidharma tradition with the developed scholasticism of *Vibh.* If, further, the quite late extant Chinese *Vibhāṣā* texts are the only concrete evidence we have for the date of each specific idea in the *Vibh* corpus, and if individual texts in the *Vibh* corpus may have been open and subject to accretion even past Buddhavarman, then, in sum, it seems that we have very little grounds for confidence that any Sarvâstivāda ideas about bodies preceded the ideas we find firmly attested at a much earlier date in the earliest Chinese translations of various Mahāyāna texts. Even where there is indeed a good fit between Sarvâstivāda Abhidharma (i.e. *Vibh*) models of the Buddha's embodiment and early Mahāyāna models, such as those found in the Prajñāpāramitā literature, therefore, we certainly cannot be sure that influence did not flow in the opposite direction, from Mahāyāna models to the Sarvâstivāda.

In fact, in a situation of such uncertainty, it seems that we would be much better served if, rather than unquestioningly taking our cue from the simplifying models of traditional doxography, we first examined the order in which ideas in fact appear in our record, bracketing out for the time being questions of the (supposed) sectarian affiliation of our texts and the ideas they contain, and proceed in reverse, from the chronology of ideas we thus discover, to try and evaluate on relatively label-independent grounds the likely date of the ideas about bodies we find in various texts. Of course, we cannot hope to make definitive determinations about texts as complex as the *Vibhāṣās* on the basis of the very small sample of content we have studied here, but at least insofar as we confine the question to doctrines about

bodies alone, it would seem that application of this sort of criterion and method would in fact lead to a very different conclusion.

We have seen, for example, that the doctrine of *sôpadhiśeṣa-* and *nirupadhiśeṣanirvāṇadhātu* in the text is complex and sophisticated, and that it is firmly centred on the corporeal interpretation of those concepts, in which respects we would rather expect it, in light of the preliminary survey of other references surveyed in the Appendix to Chapter 3, to be rather late. We have also seen that the term "body of birth" is very rare in the Chinese canon as a whole, but that its use is most concentrated in *Vibh* itself and, even more so, in Kumārajīva's translation of MPPŚ, which coincides quite closely chronologically with the Buddhavarman translation; I argued above that this may well suggest that the fad for the term was quite closely concentrated in a Sarvâstivāda context for a relatively brief period,[2127] perhaps a time quite close in date to the translation of these texts.[2128] More generally, we have also seen that the doctrine of the Buddha's bodies in the text as a whole is extraordinarily rich, and that the question of the nature of the Buddha's various bodies, and the status of his most veritable embodiment, seems, somewhat suddenly,[2129] to warrant a great deal of attention, and to invade the discussion at every turn. Although it may yet be premature to make such judgements, the overall impression gained by the largest arc of development in Buddha-body doctrine is that this preoccupation with complex models of the Buddha's bodies in all their ramifications, bodies moreover specifically named with various colourful names, is if anything characteristic

[2127] See above p. 870.

[2128] Otherwise, why would the term not have appeared in the Chinese record earlier; and why would it appear independently, multiple times, in two translations in such a brief period, only to virtually recede into obscurity almost immediately?

[2129] In this sense, we might legitimately add the bodies of the Buddha to the list of "significant . . . new topics" which the *vibhāṣā* texts added to those discussed in the root text; see Willemen, Dessein and Cox 239.

of a period beginning in the late third century at the earliest, and perhaps more securely datable to the fourth century.

Thus, a careful examination of ideas about the Buddha's embodiments in the Sarvâstivāda Abhidharma canon prior to *Vibh,* and the distribution of the ideas we have studied above in the various "*vibhāṣā* compendia" themselves, suggests that prior scholars have been too simplistic and hasty when they have thought it possible, on the basis of the study of the Xuanzang version of *Vibh* alone (perhaps in conjunction with AKBh?), either (1) to characterise "the" Sarvâstivāda theory of the Buddha-bodies, as if that theory was as old as the school itself and immutable; or (2) to assume that the theory so characterised exerted influence on the formation of Buddha-body theory in the earliest Mahāyāna texts. Rather, it has emerged clearly, first, that the doctrines found in the *Vibhāṣā* texts represent a sudden burst of intensive and extensive interest in the Buddha bodies as a *new* problematic in the Sarvâstivāda context; and second, that these doctrines were considerably mutable over time even within the confines of the *Vibhāṣā,* in ways significant enough to show ongoing development whether our extant texts represent several exemplars of the same genre, or variant recensions of "the same" single text. Further, we have also seen that, amid the considerable complexities of textual history that bedevil relations among the several *Vibhāṣā,* we cannot discount the possibility that the passages we examined to understand the body doctrine of the text underwent change and innovation over time, and therefore, that we cannot extrapolate confidently from what we find in our extant texts, all dating to within a few years of 400 C.E. at the earliest, and the state of affairs in the first century, as would be required in order to postulate a Sarvâstivāda "influence" on the earliest Mahāyāna in respect of Buddha-body doctrine.

4.4.12 Conclusions

This concludes our survey of the doctrines of the Buddha's bodies in the canonical texts of the Sarvâstivāda Abhidharma and *Vibh*, the first major commentarial compendium. I will now summarise the findings made in the course of the above study.

First, while it seems broadly to be true, as prior scholarship has held, that the Sarvâstivādins taught a "two-body" theory of the Buddha, there are two respects in which the prior characterisation of that two-body theory, in and of itself, require basic revision.

First, it is not at all true, as previous scholars have asserted, that the *rūpakāya* is ascribed to the Buddha as one of his two special bodies. Rather, it seems to have been the position of the Sarvâstivāda as represented by the *Vibhāṣā* that the Buddha had, in opposition to the *dharmakāya,* a "body of birth" or "body born of father and mother".

We saw, in fact, that a *rūpakāya* is clearly ascribed to the Buddha only three times in all the texts under study – once in the *Prajñaptiśāstra,* for which we must remember that our translation is extremely later; once in the Buddhavarman version of the text, where the same term is missing from the Xuanzang version; and once in the Xuanzang translation only, where the term is missing from exactly the same context in the Buddhavarman version. It is thus in fact extremely rare for the Sarvâstivāda corpus down to *Vibh* to ascribe a *rūpakāya* to the Buddha. On the other hand, as we saw, it is quite common for some of the texts, *Vibh* included, to use the term *rūpakāya* in quite a different sense, to refer to bodies of ordinary sentient beings in the *kāma*- and *rūpadhātu* as opposed to the immaterial bodies of beings in the *ārūpyadhātu*. We can only conclude that the prevalent understanding that the Sarvâstivāda teaches that the

Buddha "has" a *rūpakāya* misrepresents not only the actual Buddha-body doctrine of the texts, but also their actual doctrine of *rūpakāya.*

The question is, of course, what difference a name makes. If it were to turn out that the traditional characterisation of Sarvâstivāda doctrine is accurate in all but the name it puts to this body of the Buddha, then we could simply substitute the term "body of birth" and be done with it. However, there are in fact several respects in which the use of the term "body of birth" may be significantly different from *rūpakāya.*

First, I have argued above that it is possible to identify a precedent for the notion of the "body of birth" in the DN 2 model of practice and the fruits of practice that contrasts the ordinary given physical body with the *manomayakāya,* in exchange for which it is "sloughed off". This means that the term almost certainly brought with it a whole set of resonances, concepts about the given body and better alternatives for which it might be exchanged, from that original context. In particular, it seems likely that the term was carefully chosen for at least three key associations: (1) that the body is emphatically material, coarse, dependent upon food, etc., that is, generally subject to worldly restrictions and conditions, which we have seen was a dimension of the "body of birth" that emerged in a number of contexts; (2) that the body is specifically "born *of father and mother*", with all the associations of impurity that attach to such a genesis, a dimension of the body concerned that we have seen was considered key by the authors of the text in their controversy with the Mahāsāṃghikas about the purity of the Buddha, and which they also discussed in detail in a number of passages; (3) that the body could be replaced or transcended, and indeed in a sense was destined or marked for such transcendence, as in the DN 2 "snake slough" model by the *manomayakāya* and the various realisations and powers that ensued upon its elaboration – where, it seems, realisation of the

true nature of the body, as "born of father and mother" etc., was even a pivotal moment in the path towards that transcendence. None of these associations, arguably, would necessarily attach to the more vague and generic term *rūpakāya*, and so we ignore the terminological specificity of the Sarvâstivāda doctors at our peril.

Second, the fact that this body is called the "body of birth" may be important for the ways it ties into what is actually said about this body, where the specific doctrines of the text turn out, on examination, to be more complex than anything that the label *rūpakāya* and stereotypical presentations thereof in the secondary literature would lead us to believe. If part of the resonance carried over from the DN 2 origins of the term was that the body in question was destined to be transcended, then it seems likely that the term was chosen or appreciated precisely for the ways it thus captured the ambivalent status of the Buddha's last earthly physical body, especially as that body related to the Buddha's transcendent status once he had achieved *anuttarasaṃyaksaṃbodhi* and become *buddha*.

As we saw above, the various doctrines of the "body of birth", when surveyed in their totality, present a complex picture, riven by internal tensions, of a body which is at once mundane in some important respects (it is impure, prey to weakness and misfortune, etc.), and also quite extraordinary in others (it is the strongest body in the world, it can travel to the Brahmā Heaven etc.). Considered in its extraordinary dimensions, the "body of birth" is certainly not just an ordinary given physical body like those that other sentient beings also have – and yet, this is the main impression conveyed by the bland assertion that the Buddha has merely a *dharmakāya* and a *rūpakāya*. Not only is the assertion that the Buddha "has" a *rūpakāya* terminologically inaccurate, therefore, but it expresses an inaccurate understanding of the actual character of the body opposed to the *dharmakāya* in Sarvâstivāda Abhidharma, and for

this reason, it is not just a semantic quibble, but a matter of real substance, to set the received mischaracterisation of that body aright.

Third, the difference between the actual use of "body of birth" etc. and the actually unused *rūpakāya* may be significant because as we have seen above, the term "body born of father and mother", especially, is in fact very rare, at least in the texts comprised in the Chinese canon, and the term thus operates as a kind of conceptual fingerprint that allows us to trace quite close doctrinal connections between the body doctrine of *Vibh* and MPPŚ which we might otherwise overlook in the midst of vague generalisations about "the *rūpakāya*".

If our analysis has thus led to a significant revision of the received picture of Sarvâstivāda Abhidharma doctrine about the Buddha bodies on the side of the physical body, I have also argued that we must also revise our understanding of the *dharmakāya* as it is understood in these texts, though for a very different reason.

As we saw, previous scholars have tended to describe the Sarvâstivāda Abhidharma *dharmakāya* as *either* (a) the eighteen qualities unique to a Buddha (*āveṇikadharmas*) (Guang Xing); *or* (b) the qualities of those beyond further training (*aśaikṣadharmas*), where that term is understood with an emphasis on special knowledge of the destruction of taints and special knowledge of their not arising again in future (*kṣaya-, anutpādajñāna*) and the five "pure aggregates" (*anāsravadharmas*) as the "attendants" of those *jñānas* (la Vallée Poussin, Makransky). In fact, however, we saw that both of these characterisations are propounded in different places in *Vibh*.

We further saw that while the la Vallée Poussin/Makransky reading of the specific content of the *aśaikṣadharmas* is indeed supportable, if only via a detour through the deepest bowels of *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* somewhat more convoluted than either of those scholars seems to have entertained, study of the definition of the *aśaikṣadharmas* by the simpler route of enquiry within the boundaries of *Vibh* itself yields rather a definition in terms of a tenfold rubric comprising the "pure" versions of the members of the eightfold noble path plus perfect/correct liberation (*saṃyagvimukti*) and perfect/correct special knowledge (*saṃyagjñāna*). We saw further, however, that these two definitions (in terms of the "pure aggregates" and in terms of the tenfold rubric) differ only in surface semantics, since it is possible to identify morality (*śīla*), concentration (*dhyāna*) and wisdom (*prajñā*) with the eightfold path, and also to identify liberation and insight into the special knowledge of liberation (*vimukti, vimuktijñānadarśana*) with *saṃyagvimukti* and *saṃyagjñāna,* so that the two rubrics map onto one another perfectly.

In both AKBh and *Vibh,* as we saw, the definition of the *dharmakāya* (or at least of the Buddha as refuge) in terms of the *aśaikṣadharmas* also contained a further, much more central component, *bodhi*: the definitions were in terms of "*bodhi* comprised by the *aśaikṣadharmas*" etc. This fact leads us directly to the most important central contention of the reinterpretation of the Sarvâstivāda notion of *dharmakāya* for which I argued above – the claim that the Sarvâstivāda *dharmakāya,* as much as the *dharmakāya* of the Prajñāpāramitā, must be understood as in its own way also a doctrine of the Buddha's most veritable embodiment in his gnosis. *Bodhi* is central to this definition, and the *aśaikṣadharmas,* even insofar as they do indeed enter in to the definition, are ancillary ("attendant", *parivāra*). Characterisations of this definition that fixate too much on those *dharmas*, therefore, largely miss the underlying point.

Indeed, I hope to have showed above that, in a looser sense, even the definition of the *dharmakāya* in terms of the qualities unique to the Buddha (*āveṇikadharmas*), rather than the qualities of those beyond further training (*aśaikṣadharmas*), is not so very different from the latter definition as it might seem, and precisely because in this case, also, we can see the rubric as fundamentally centred on gnosis. As we saw in the analysis above, careful scrutiny of the actual members of the *āveṇikadharma* rubric reveals that the majority of them (the ten "powers", which moreover are given pride of place in the enumeration of the rubric and the relative aetiology of these qualities as they are explained in detail in the text) are kinds of special knowledge (*jñāna*), and indeed, that the tenth member of the rubric, which in some sense arguably constitutes its pinnacle, is identical with the essential part of the tenth member of the *aśaikṣadharma* rubric, that is, it is *āsravakṣayajñāna* or "special knowledge of the destruction of taints (outflows)".[2130] We also saw that the four confidences and the three bases of mindfulness have a strong cognitive or even gnostic taint to them. With the possible exception of its eighteenth member, great compassion, therefore, the entire rubric has a very strong gnostic cast. This means that *both* of the apparently differing definitions of the *dharmakāya* current in these materials find a common core precisely in the underlying focus on gnosis. That they share this common focus has never been noticed in previous scholarship, however, in part because no previous scholar has ever studied both definitions together, but perhaps, more seriously, because scholars have been too ready to assume that "Mainstream" Sarvâstivāda and Mahāyāna must be fundamentally different (or, where they are the same, that they must share what is perceived as the "Mainstream" focus, as in Harrison), and perhaps also because scholars have been too preoccupied with the bristling technicalities of the Abhidharma lists to probe beneath their surface to the underlying spirit that animates them.

[2130] See above n. 1979.

This central focus on gnosis in the Sarvâstivāda Abhidharma conception of the *dharmakāya* means, further, that insofar as Paul Harrison is justified, in his article "Real Phantom Body" (as discussed in detail in Chapter 4.3), in arguing for the abolition of "imaginary discontinuities" in our portrayal of Buddhist doctrines of bodies, he may be justified in precisely the opposite direction the that he himself urges. The true commonality between Prajñāpāramitā and Sarvâstivāda doctrines of the *dharmakāya,* I argue, is not in that they all alike hold most centrally that the Buddha is embodied in some plural set of *dharmas* (and far less, with few exceptions, in his teaching), but in that they all alike hold most centrally that the Buddha is most veritably embodied in his gnosis. To that degree, insofar as we might want to make invidious choices about the putative *number* of the *dharmakāya,* it is undoubtedly more accurate to say that it is singular and unitary, even in Sarvâstivāda Abhidharma. It is thus inaccurate to the actual doctrine of the texts not just to fixate too much upon this or that list of *dharmas,* in whose terms the *dharmakāya* may be (partially) defined and characterised here or there in the texts, but also to fixate too much on the *plurality* of those *dharmas*, and thereby to ignore the underlying coherence and integrity given to the Sarvâstivāda Abhidharma conception of the *dharmakāya* by the central place of gnosis (*bodhi, jñāna*) therein.

Thus, to summarise, a more accurate characterisation of the Buddha-body doctrine in the *Vibhāṣā* would be this: Sarvâstivāda Abhidharma, as it is represented by the *vibhāṣā* compendia, largely but not univocally teaches a two-body theory of the Buddha, wherein the bodies are (1) the "body of birth" or "body born of father and mother" (**sāṃbhavikakāya, mātṛpitṛsaṃbhavakāya*); and (2) the *dharmakāya;* of which the *dharmakāya* is certainly held to be the Buddha's more essential and veritable embodiment.[2131] The "body of birth" is held to be

[2131] I would thus strongly dispute the claim, advanced e.g. by Takeuchi Shōkō, "Buddakan" 161, that the Sarvâstivāda doctrine "is a two-body theory that consistently emphasises the *rūpakāya*" (あくまで色身に重点をおいた二身説である) where the Prajñāpāramitā, supposedly *by contrast,* emphasised the *dharmakāya*.

almost entirely unique to the Buddha, though it is also ascribed to him when he is still *bodhisattva*, and it is a complex mix of worldly and extraordinary or superhuman elements, held in some degree of tension with one another. The *dharmakāya* is variously characterised either in terms of the qualities unique to the Buddha (*āveṇikadharmas*) or in terms *bodhi* and the qualities of one beyond further training (*aśaikṣadharmas*). In either case, however, it is most centrally an embodiment in gnosis, and this is the true common conception of the *dharmakāya* held in common by Sarvâstivāda and Prajñāpāramitā sources. The relation between either of these bodies and the "body of marks", which is just called "the Buddha's body" etc., is uncertain. The text does not teach a *nirmāṇakāya, pace* la Vallée Poussin.

Thus, the study undertaken here has occasioned a significant revision of received opinion about the concrete contents of Sarvâstivāda Abhidharma doctrine about the Buddha's bodies. We have also seen, however, that there is significant reason to question the assumptions and conclusions of previous scholarship about the chronological and historical relations between these ideas and those of other Buddhist "schools" and texts, and therefore, to reconsider their place in the overall history of Buddha-body doctrine.

First, we saw, through our survey of the Sarvâstivāda Abhidharma canonical works that precede *Vibh,* that even down to the *Jñānaprasthāna/*Aṣṭaskandhaśāstra,* the root text upon which *Vibh* comments, the school was almost entirely uninterested in the problem of the Buddha's bodies, though it did sometimes consider problematics (later) related thereto, such as the qualities of those beyond further training (*aśaikṣadharmas*), the *nirvāṇadhātu* with and without remainder, and so on. Thus, the extensive interest in the problem of the Buddha's embodiments, in multiple dimensions, evinced in *Vibh* itself is not an indication of a timeless theme of Sarvâstivāda scholasticism, but rather, within that context at least, a sudden and

unprecedented topic of speculation. This evidence alone should make us suspicious of the assumption that any material shared with Mahāyāna textual traditions, like Prajñāpāramitā, must be borrowed *from* Sarvâstivāda into those other contexts.

We also saw that there are a number of reasons to seriously doubt that the material about embodiments that we find in *Vibh* itself predates the earliest Prajñāpāramitā as evidenced in the *Aṣṭa* of Lokakṣema and other early Chinese translations. First, our only extant texts date from much later than this material, giving us only very late dates *terminus ad quem.* Second, there is evidence on numerous fronts that the Sarvâstivāda Abhidharma corpus in general was, like other such textual corpora, open to change and accretion throughout a long history, so that we have no guarantee that material about bodies might not be later in date than surrounding material, even were we able to confidently date other parts of the text to a very early time. Third, we saw that in the cases where we can concretely compare corresponding passages in earlier and later Chinese translations, the correspondence in body doctrine is only partial, and there are at least four cases of ideas about bodies absent from the Buddhavarman but present in the Xuanzang that cannot be explained by the partial nature of the former translation, though they may be due equally to differences of recension and interpretative stance as to later interpolation. Fourth, we saw that the term "body born of father and mother" in particular, which is used with unusual frequency in *Vibh,* is otherwise very rare in the Chinese record, but that instances are especially numerous, outside *Vibh,* in Kumārajīva's MPPŚ, which like the earlier versions of *Vibh* was translated around the turn of the fifth century. This suggests that perhaps the term was a flash-in-the-pan coinage, perhaps in the period of extraordinary ferment of inventiveness about bodies that seems to have characterised the fourth century in general, but thereafter rapidly dropped out of vogue, in which case its

presence in *Vibh* may suggest that the ideas about bodies so expressed also date quite closely to this later period.

While none of these reasons to doubt the earliness of body doctrine in *Vibh* is conclusive, in combination, and in light of the fact that *Vibh* is moreover the first text in the corpus to show interest in the very problematic of bodies, they are sufficient to cast serious doubt upon the unwarranted confidence of previous scholars that ideas about bodies, and in particular the twofold model, flowed *from* Sarvâstivāda (or other "Mainstream" contexts) *to* Mahāyāna and Prajñāpāramitā in particular. We must remember, in evaluating this problem, that in contrast to this state of affairs in regard to Sarvâstivāda, solid evidence allows us to date the ideas in question much earlier in the Prajñāpāramitā corpus in particular. As we saw above, the idea of the Buddha as embodied in his gnosis is certainly present in Prajñāpāramitā texts right from Lokakṣema's *Aṣṭa* translation of 179 C.E., and the overt contrast between the *dharmakāya* and the *rūpakāya* is posed, in those very terms, already as early as Mokṣala's *Pañca* in 280 C.E. Even insofar as the Sarvâstivāda and Prajñāpāramitā "two-body" models are truly similar and compatible, therefore, as the evidence stands, it is surely equally possible, if not indeed more likely, that Sarvâstivāda Abhidharma texts were influenced by an earlier Prajñāpāramitā model, rather than the other way around as received opinion assumes.

Thus, the second major revision to received opinion required by the study essayed above is that we should no longer confidently state that the Sarvâstivāda "two-body" model of the Buddha's embodiments is the source of the very idea of "two bodies" *per se,* or that it was borrowed therefrom into Prajñāpāramitā.[2132] At best, we might say that the *Vibhāṣā* claim that the Buddha

[2132] We had occasion to note in passing in our study above occasions where the text seems to lean towards some stereotypically Mahāyāna ideas, such as the *imitatio buddhi* model implicit in the idea of "cultivating" the bodies of the Buddha through the monastic life; see above p. 860. Note also that Demiéville, for example, speaks of "certain allusions, veiled in one way or another, to doctrines which

has two bodies is weak evidence that embodiment doctrine of the text might perhaps date back as far as similar Prajñāpāramitā doctrines, without prejudice as to the question of which, if either, was the original seedbed of that idea; beyond this, however, we must also admit that the balance of the soundly datable evidence we have to hand would, if anything, argue that the idea that the Buddha has two kinds of bodies was probably in the Prajñāpāramitā context before it entered Sarvâstivāda scholasticism, whether it originated in Prajñāpāramitā or was borrowed by both from some common third source.

Finally, in summing up the findings of this study of body doctrine in Sarvâstivāda Abhidharma as represented by the *Vibhāṣā,* it is important to note that if I am correct in arguing that the *dharmakāya* is the more veritable and essential of the Buddha's two bodies in the actual two-body model of the text, and that *dharmakāya* further is most centrally understood in terms of embodiment in gnosis, then this represents a major point in common between the body doctrines not only of Sarvâstivāda Abhidharma and Prajñāpāramitā, but also of the reliquary inscriptions from the early Common Era. I will return to this point in the general conclusion to the present chapter (Ch. 4) as a whole, where I will explore the possibility that these various sources testify to the emergence across a large swath of the Buddhist world of a shared conception of the Buddha's veritable embodiment in gnosis early in the Common Era.

implicitly announce the Mahāyāna without naming it as such" as a characteristic feature of the *Vibhāṣā;* "L'origine" 24 fn. b.

Chapter 4.5 The emergence of the *dharmakāya* and the *rūpakāya,* as seen primarily through the evidence of the Chinese record

4.5.1 Introduction

In the course of our close study of Prajñāpāramitā materials in Chapter 4.3 above, we saw that elements of the emergent *dharmakāya* are clearly present in Lokakṣema's *Aṣṭa* and other works he translated, but not by that name. We also saw in Chapter 4.2, in our study of the "Lokôttaravāda" *Lokânuvartanā-sūtra,* which was also translated by Lokakṣema, that this text comes much closer to actually naming the idea of *dharmakāya* in so many words ("the Buddha takes *dharma*(*s*) as his body", "the Buddha is embodied in *dharma*(*s*)", but that we cannot conclude confidently on those grounds that the term *dharmakāya* necessarily lies behind Lokakṣema's translations even there.

On the other hand, we saw further (§4.3.11) that in Mokṣala's *Pañca,* approximately a hundred years later, we do already find the *dharmakāya* so-named; that *dharmakāya* is explicitly identified with *dharmatā* (in Ch. 44); that *dharmatā* is in turn discussed in terms that we know elsewhere will come to be closely associated with *dharmakāya* (in Ch. 79); and further, that *dharmakāya* is opposed to *rūpakāya* in a manner which we know elsewhere came to be typical of the *dharmakāya* (Ch. 89). It thus seems that, in the Prajñāpāramitā context at least, Mokṣala sits on a cusp, at which the term *dharmakāya* was just emerging and was beginning to be applied to some of the concepts for which that term eventually became so well-known, but when the term *dharmatā* was still also being used almost interchangeably for some of the same family of ideas.

These various materials pose for us a well-defined historical question, which is further well worth investigation: are the Mokṣala materials we have already examined therefore the earliest instance we have of the term *dharmakāya* clearly being used to label what we recognise retrospectively as "the" *dharmakāya,* or can this usage be found earlier?

This question about the emergence of the *dharmakāya* has its own obvious independent value. However, given the fact that the standard narrative of the development of Buddha-body doctrine to date has assumed that *dharmakāya* doctrine was, already prior to the Mahāyāna, part of a two-body model of *dharmakāya* vs. *rūpakāya,* it is natural for us to also pursue in conjunction with it the question of the emergence of *rūpakāya* in opposition to the *dharmakāya.* This second task becomes all the more pressing in light of our findings above that the group usually thought to be the original authors of the *dharmakāya-rūpakāya* model, the Sarvâstivādins, appear not to have propounded that model until much later in their history than the standard narrative would require.

We have seen above that *rūpakāya* as a body of the Buddha in fact appears only extremely rarely in the Sarvâstivāda, and is rather usually understood to be a body shared by ordinary sentient beings born in the lower two of the three realms of the cosmos, viz. the *kāmadhātu* and *rūpadhātu*. We have also seen that instead of the supposed *rūpakāya,* the Sarvâstivāda Abhidharma texts down to the *Vibhāṣā* in fact hold that the Buddha has a "body of birth" or "body born of father and mother". Yet, despite these facts, Buddhology to date has usually imagined that Sarvâstivāda is the origin of a two-body theory of the Buddha's embodiments in which he is understood to have a *rūpakāya*. It is certainly the case that some Buddhist texts *did* speak of the *rūpakāya* as a body of the Buddha, so it is a natural next step to ask when they began doing so, and if possible, to identify the provenance of this conception of the Buddha's embodiment.

In this section of this dissertation, therefore, we turn our attention to evidence for the actual timing and context of the emergence of these notions. In this investigation, I have relied

primarily on the evidence of the Chinese record. At best, of course, this evidence is only a first approximation, since we have to bear in mind the possibility that the order in which ideas appear in this translation record is not necessarily an accurate reflection of the order in which they were elaborated, but might rather be the product of various other vicissitudes that could have governed the transmission of ideas to China. Nonetheless, in many cases, the Chinese record can provide us with a good first approximation, and especially if ideas cannot be found before a certain point in the Chinese record, but thereafter proliferate in a range of texts and contexts, we are entitled to ask why, and to think that it might reflect something significant about the order of development of Buddhist ideas in India also.

We will see below that the results of this preliminary survey are surprising, in terms of what received scholarly opinion would lead us to expect. The *dharmakāya* so named seems if anything to emerge slightly earlier than *rūpakāya,* and in a number of cases emerges in contexts where it is not conjoined to *rūpakāya.* This, and the fact that foreshadowings of the notion of the *dharmakāya* can be traced in earlier layers of the record (as we have seen in Chapter 4.2 and 4.3) suggest that it may be an independent development from *rūpakāya.* Nonetheless, at least so named, it seems that the *dharmakāya* may be an idea that develops as late as approx. 200 C.E., and certainly I have been able to find precious little evidence that can give us confidence it is any older than that. The *rūpakāya,* by contrast, rather than emerging in some ready-made dyad with the *dharmakāya* as the model of Sarvâstivāda authorship would have us believe, seems to emerge, if anything, as a kind of reaction to the idea of the *dharmakāya*, perhaps slightly later; we will see that the first signs of it in the Chinese record are a few decades later than those of the *dharmakāya*, but this is a chronological gap short enough to make us hesitate to attribute too much significance to it. Furthermore, in stark contrast to the received version of events, the first contexts in which the *rūpakāya* is found are uniformly Mahāyāna.

4.5.2 The earliest clear mention of *dharmakāya* so-called in the Chinese record

As it turns out, it seems impossible to find a clear instance of the term *dharmakāya*, i.e. of the concept of the *dharmakāya* referred to *by that name,* in the very earliest layer of Chinese translations.

First, I can find in An Shigao no instance of the term applied to the Buddha and in any sense recognisably related to what the term *dharmakāya* came to mean.

To review conclusions already presented above, the term is almost unknown in the corpus of Lokakṣema, though complications ensue in the consideration of the evidence from this corpus. We already saw (§4.3.8) that in the case of one possible instance of the term in *Aṣṭa,* where it took the form *fojingshen* 佛經身, it is not possible to conclude with any certainty that Lokakṣema had the term *dharmakāya* before him in his Indic text, whatever reason he may have had for using the translation term we find in his text. We also examined another instance of the same term in T282, where we saw it corresponds quite straightforwardly to *fashen* 法身 in the succeeding translation by Zhi Qian. This evidence, I suggested, makes it more likely that this was Lokakṣema's translation for the term *dharmakāya,* and thus could indicate that not just the concept but the term itself was already current in his time; but I remain reluctant to base such an important conclusion on these two somewhat ambiguous pieces of evidence alone.

As we also already saw above (§4.3.9), the term *fashen* 法身 occurs several times in Lokakṣema's corpus, though only in two texts: *Drumakinnararājaparipṛcchā-sūtra* T624, and the **Ajātaśatrukaukṛtyavinodanā-sūtra* T626. I argued that in some cases, it seems clear, *pace* Harrison, that whatever Sanskrit *term* underlies these Chinese terms, the *concept* at stake is

apparently moving in the direction of the later *dharmakāya.* However, we also saw (again in §4.3.9) that Harrison shows that in these texts, Lokakṣema's *fashen* corresponds not to *dharmakāya,* but to *dharmadhātu* (*chos kyi dbyings*) or *dharmatā* (*chos nyid*) in extant Tibetan versions of the texts. Here, where the main question that concerns us is the advent of the *dharmakāya* precisely *by that name,* we need to note carefully that there is insufficient evidence even in these cases in the Lokakṣema corpus to conclude that the *dharmakāya* so named was already current.

Thus, though we find some quite tantalising material in Lokakṣema that seems to indicate we are on the very brink of the articulation of the notion of *dharmakāya,* and that he may indeed have even known the term, we cannot be sure that the term itself was indeed current so early. In Zhi Qian's translation of the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa* (hereafter *Vim*), however, we find the term clearly used three times in two passages.

In the first and most significant of these two passages, the term *dharmakāya* (佛法身) is clearly used to refer to the most veritable body of the Buddha in the course of an extended disquisition on the topic. This passage is therefore of key historical importance, being the earliest passage I can find in which a recognisable notion of *dharmakāya, so-named,* is found in the Chinese record, and thus the best indication we have, in my opinion, of the likely date of the emergence of that term in that use.

The passage in question, which is quite extended, appears in the second half of Chapter II of *Vim.*[2133] Famously, Vimalakīrti is posing as sick in order to use the occasion to teach the Dharma,

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[2133] T474.521a25-b27; corresponding to Ch. II §8-13 in Lamotte's numbering: Lamotte, *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa* 132-140; Watson, *Vimalakirti* 34-36; Thurman, *Holy Teaching* 22-23.

and responding to the well-meaning inquiries of those who have come to ask after his health. Vimalakīrti's discourse contrasts the ordinary given physical body, and all of the reasons it is transient, unreliable, dissatisfactory and unimportant, with the true body, which is the *dharmakāya*.

Significantly, Vimalakīrti refers to the ordinary given physical body in this context as the "body comprising four gross elements" (四大身, **māhābhūtikakāya*)[2134] and not as the *rūpakāya*. Like the Sarvâstivāda terms "body of birth" and "body of father and mother",[2135] the term "body of four gross elements"[2136] is redolent of the key passage from DN 2.[2137] It seems possible that both terms – "body of birth" and "body of four gross elements" – are vestiges of a phase in which the DN 2 passage was recalled and used in attempts to articulate the kind of body that is to be opposed to the newly-coined *dharmakāya,* but perhaps prior to the phase in which the term *rūpakāya* had really "stuck" as the standard term for that body.

In the passage at issue, then, the ordinary given body, **māhābhūtikakāya*, is described in some detail as radically unsatisfactory, being transitory, frail, unreliable, weak, destined to perish, subject to death, vulnerable to disease, etc.; it is compared to a mere ball of foam, a bubble of water, a mirage, the (soft, weak) trunk of a plantain tree, etc., according to stock lists of

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2134 T474.521a28-29.

2135 For these terms seem below §4.4.4-4.4.6.

2136 The term *sidashen* 四大身 is in fact otherwise relatively rare in the Chinese canon as a whole. In the following passage from the *Jizhi guo jing* 寂志果經 T22 (a free-standing translation of DN 2, the *Sāmaññaphala-sutta,* made by Tan Wulan 曇無蘭 between 381 and 395; see Lancaster's *Korean Buddhist Canon* s.v. K658), however, it is clearly used as part of a condensed version of the DN 2 pericope about the given physical body: 比丘作是了知。已得正受。其身寂然。是四大身。從父母生。魂神所依, T22.275a13-15.

2137 See above p. 252.

Mahāyāna figures for the transitory and insubstantial.[2138] Vimalakīrti then announces (in the Zhi Qian version) that his audience should turn from this body and "study" or "imitate" (學) the body of the Buddha, in the mode of *imitatio buddhi*.[2139] This leads into the passage on the *dharmakāya,* which, given its significance as the earliest clear mention of that concept so named I have been able to find, I will translate in full:[2140]

> "The Buddha's *dharmakāya* (佛法身) is born of merit; the Buddha's body is born of *jñāna*; it is born of the aggregate of morality (*śīla*), the aggregate of absorption (*samādhi*), the aggregate of insight (*prajñā*), the aggregate of liberation (*vimukti*), and the aggregate of insight into the special knowledge [of liberation] ([*vimukti-*]*jñānadarśana*). It is born of benevolence, compassion, rejoicing and continence (?護, Lamotte provides *upekṣā*); it is born of charity, 'regulating the mind' (調意, discipline, **vinaya*) and 'loss of self' (自損, Lamotte 'mastery of self', **saṃyama*). It is born of tolerance of humiliation, love of fellow humanity, and harmonious accommodation (忍辱仁愛柔和);[2141] born of the merit of forceful application to practice; it is born of [the four] *dhyāna* (禪), [the eight] *vimokṣa* (解), and [the three] concentrations (定意正受, **samādhi-samāpatti*); it is born from the merit of insight (智, *prajñā*), and immeasurable learning (度無極聞); it is born of skill in means and strategic wisdom[2142] (善權方便智謀); it is born of saving all [beings] without limit (一切諸度無極);[2143] it is born of the thirty-seven auxiliaries to awakening (*bodhipākṣikadharmas*); it is born of the superknowledges (*abhijñā,* 神通);[2144] it is born of cessation and insight (止觀, *śamatha, vipaśyanā*); it is born of the ten powers (十力, *daśabala*); it is born of the four confidences; it is born of the eighteen [unique] qualities of the Buddha ([*āveṇika-*]*buddhadharma*); it is born of the extirpation of all bad *dharmas* (斷一切惡法, **sarvākuśaladharmaprahāṇa*); it is born of the gathering together of all good *dharmas* (一切善法合會, **sarvakuśaladharmasaṃgraha*); it is born of truth (諦,

2138 T474.521a25-b15; Lamotte 132-138.

2139 如佛法身吾等當學, T474.521b15. Note that we also find this same conceit of imitating the Buddha's *body* in the Sarvâstivāda *Vibhāṣā,* for which see p. 860 below.

2140 The following translation translates Zhi Qian, since that is the version of the text that concerns us here, but I have consulted with Lamotte's masterful scholarly version of the text and the recently discovered Sanskrit.

2141 These are very Chinese-sounding virtues! Lamotte has here in the sequence "[né des] dix bons chemins de l'acte (*daśa kuśalakarmapatha*)", to which he unfortunately does not provide one of his erudite footnotes.

2142 Nothing seems to correspond to this in Lamotte.

2143 Nothing seems to correspond to this in Lamotte.

2144 This item appears in a different place in the overall order of the list in Lamotte.

> *satya*) and it is born of earnestness (誠, **apramāda*). Incalculable pure practices [thus combine to] comprise the body of the Tathāgata(如來身)."[2145]

As the passages I have underlined show, this passage evinces a very rich and complex understanding of the *dharmakāya,* and one which is further in line with understandings of the *dharmakāya* and the Buddha's embodiments more generally that we have had or will have occasion to note in other contexts throughout the early Chinese-canonical materials.[2146] Thus, we see in this passage that the *dharmakāya* is already identified as a gnostic embodiment ("born of *jñāna*"), as in the Lokakṣema *Aṣṭa,* and as we shall see it is also understood centrally in the Sarvâstivāda Abhidharma;[2147] it is understood to be related to the five pure aggregates, which we have encountered as a central feature of the Kharoṣṭhī reliquary inscription doctrine of relics, which we have seen above are also a central feature of the doctrine of embodiment in

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[2145] 佛法身者從福祐生。佛身者從智生。從戒品定品慧品解品度知見品生。從慈悲喜護生。從布施調意自損生。從忍辱仁愛柔和生。從強行精進功德生。從禪解定意正受生。從智度無極聞德生。從善權方便智謀生。從一切諸度無極生。從三十七道品生。從神通生。從止觀生。從十力生。從四無所畏生。從佛十八法生。從斷一切惡法生。從一切善法合會生。從諦生。從誠生不可計清淨行爲成如來身, T474.521b15-24. The match to Skt is inexact in some details but on the whole very close: *dharmakāyo hi mārṣāḥ tathāgatakāyo dānanirjātaḥ śīlanirjātaḥ samādhinirjātaḥ prajñānanirjāto vimuktinirjāto vimuktijñānadarśananirjātaḥ/ matrīkaruṇāmuditôpekṣānirjātaḥ/ dānadamasaṃyamanirjātaḥ kṣāntisauryatyanirjāto dṛḍhavīryakuśalamūlanirjāto dhyānavimokṣasamādhisamāpattinirjātaḥ śrutaprajñôpāyanirjātaḥ/ saptatriṃśadbodhipakṣyanirjātaḥ śamathavidarśanānirjāto daśabalanirjātaṣ caturvaiśāradyanirjātaḥ/ aṣṭādaśâveṇikabuddhadharmanirjātaḥ sarvapāramitānirjātaḥ/ abhijñāvidyānirjātaḥ sarvâkuśaladharmaprahāṇāya nirjātaḥ sarvakuśaladharmaparigrahananirjātaḥ satyanirjāto bhūtanirjāto 'pramādanirjātaḥ/ apramāṇaśubhakarmanirjāto mārṣāḥ tathāgatakāyas . . . ;* Study Group, Skt. *Vim* 18-19. See also Lamotte, *Vim* 137-140, where the list includes, in addition to the items already found in Zhi Qian, "Le corps du Tathāgata et né du mérite (*puṇya*), né du don (*dāna*)"; "né des dix bons chemins de l'acte (*daśa kuśalakarmapatha*)";"né de toutes les perfections (*pāramitā*)"; [né] "de la (triple) science (*trividya*)".

[2146] As noted above, the present passages in this one text represent, to my knowledge, the only instance of the *dharmakāya* so-named prior to Dharmarakṣa. However, it is clear that it nonetheless does *not* constitute a case of the methodological problem of the "single anomalous instance" and how to treat it, which forms a theme running throughout the present study (§1.3.7). The conception of *dharmakāya* here is expounded with complexity and at length; different versions of the text agree closely and in detail that the term *dharmakāya* is at issue here (Lamotte notes that only the Xuanzang, of all the versions of the text, omit the term; 138 n. 29); the ideas at issue here and conceptions of the *dharmakāya* elsewhere correspond clearly and substantively; the term appears more than once in the present passage and elsewhere in the text; etc.

[2147] For the embodiment of the Buddha in/as his gnosis in Prajñāpāramitā, see especially 4.3.2 and 4.3.5; for the Sarvâstivāda Abhidharma case, see §4.4.9.

Aṣṭa, and which we will see below reappears in the Sarvâstivāda Abhidharma also;[2148] the *dharmakāya* is here also associated with the eighteen *āveṇikadharmas,* which we shall see below is one central mode in which the Sarvâstivāda Abhidharma conceives of the *dharmakāya,*[2149] and which we also saw features as part of the list of *buddhadharmas* identified with *dharmatā* in the proto-*dharmakāya* passage in Mokṣala;[2150] it is further associated with the four *dhyānas,* eight liberations (*vimokṣa*) and the three *samāpatti,* which also feature in the Mokṣala list;[2151] and it is understood as a product of the immense merit of the *bodhisattva*/Buddha, which is intrinsically bound up with the body of marks, which latter oscillates in and out of ambiguous relations with the *dharmakāya* but is definitely associated with it in some contexts elsewhere.[2152]

Thus, there is no question that in this Zhi Qian passage, we see an already quite developed understanding of the *dharmakāya* – though, of course, one that certainly does not feature everything that is sometimes advanced under that head – explicitly named by the term *dharmakāya*. This is not the only passage in which the concept of *dharmakāya* features in Zhi Qian's text, however. In the passage corresponding to Lamotte's Ch. III §45, we also read:

> "Ānanda, you should know that the Tathāgata has *dharma* for his body (如來法身, **dharmakāyas tathāgataḥ*); he is not embodied in a body of desire (?非思欲身[2153]). The

[2148] For embodiment in the five pure aggregates in Prajñāpāramitā (Lokakṣema's *Aṣṭa*), see §4.3.6; for the same in the Sarvâstivāda case, see §4.4.9.

[2149] See below §4.4.8.

[2150] See §4.3.11, especially p. 786 ff.

[2151] See once more p. 786 ff.

[2152] For the body of marks as a product of merit already in the Pāli canonical materials, see Ch. 3.1 and especially material from DN 30 at p. 321; on the last earthly body of the Buddha sometimes conceived as a body of marks in Prajñāpāramitā, see §4.3.2, on the unclear relationship between the body of marks and other specially named bodies in the Sarvâstivāda Abhidharma, see §4.4.3, esp. p. 848, 895.

[2153] This way of putting things is unusual, and difficult to fathom clearly. According to Lamotte's synthetic version of *Vim*, other versions here state rather that "it is not a body one can treat with foods" or "it is not a body mingled with excrement". In Kumārajīva's translation of this same text, the line is so

Buddha is supreme in the world (世尊[2154]),[2155] and surpasses all the things of the world (諸世間, *laukika[-dharmas][2156]). The body of the Buddha is without taint ('without outflow', *anāsrava), and [in it] all taints are ended. The body of the Buddha is countless (?無數, *asaṃkhyeya?) and [from it] all compounded phenomena (行, *saṃskāra)[2157] have been extirpated."[2158]

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close to Zhi Qian's idiosyncratic reading as to almost certainly be based upon it: 諸如來身即是法身非思欲身, T475.542a16. We are fortunate to have, in the 注維摩詰經, quite extensive comments attributed to Kumārajīva, Seng Zhao and Zhu Daosheng in which they explain their understanding of the contrast posited here, in terms which quite clearly revolve around the question of the nescient aetiology of sickness and therefore of what kind of body is heir to sickness: "'*Ānanda, you should know that the Buddha has* dharma *for his body;'* Kumārajīva says: There are three kinds of *dharmakāya.* (1) The body produced from the *dharmakāya* by magical transformation (法化生身); this is the *vajrakāya.* (2) The fivefold *dharmakāya* [this almost certainly refers to the *dharmakāya qua* the five pure aggregates – MR]. (3) The true aspect of all *dharmas* in their totality comprise buddhahood, and thus the true aspect [of all *dharmas*] is also called *dharmakāya.* '*. . . he is not embodied in a body of desire.*' Kumārajīva says: The body that is not fleshly (非肉身) is the body produced from the *dharmakāya* by magical transformation. Because it is not a form belonging to the three realms (非三界之形), it transcends the three realms. Although it is subject to arising and cessation, it is not heir to ageing or sickness or the *kleśas,* nor to the ten kinds of misfortune, and thus it is called 'without taint/outflow' (*anāsrava). Because it is *anāsrava,* in its essence it has eliminated all conditioned [*dharmas*], and thus it is called 'unconditioned' (*asaṃskṛta*). Because, in its form, it is beyond the five rebirth destinies (**pañcagati*) and it is not counted among 'things' (非物之數), it is called 'countless' (?無數, *asaṃkhyeya*?). Seng Zhao says: A dependent form (有待之形) within the three realms is called a 'body of desire' (思欲身). The meaning of '*dharmakāya*' is the expedient means (善權) already noted. Daosheng says: In terms of the language used heretofore, we should explain this as follows: 'Desire' 思欲 is an emotion[al state born] of ignorant fabrication (妄想之懷), and it is the root of illness. The body of the Tathāgata, however, issues from true principle (從實理中來). Since it does not arise from that [ignorant fabrication and desire], how could it be heir to illness?" T1775.359c19-360a02. Jizang gives a slightly different interpretation, which reads in part: '*Body of desire*' (思欲身): this can also be glossed thus: 'thought/intention' (*si* 思) is *karma*; 'desire' (*yu* 欲) is the fetters. It is not a body [bound by] fetters or *karma;*" T1781.948b11-12. The term here translated 'body of desire' is very unusual, and it seems that in all cases where it appears in the Chinese canon it can be traced back to this very line. The *dharmakāya* is contrasted to a body so-named in the 菩薩瓔珞經, 此是法身此思欲身 T656.11a29-b01; 法身思欲身/此非最真正, 68a09. A comment attributed to Seng Liang 僧亮 in the 大般涅槃經集解 uses this term in opposition to the *dharmakāya* as a gloss on the notion of the body nourished by food, in a clear reference (once more!) to the DN 2 pericope about the body sloughed off in the "snake slough" model: 釋非食身也。食所長養。非法橫生。名思欲身, T1763.421a29-b02. The reference in the 法華玄義釋籤 appears to be citing this very text, T1717.963b23-24.

[2154] Most literally, '[the most] august in the world': this is the term usually translated "World-Honoured One" etc., but context here demands we bring out more of the literal (Chinese) meaning.

[2155] Lamotte here has "the body of the Tathāgata is a supramundane body (*lokôttarakāya*)".

[2156] Lamotte gives *sarvalokadharmasamatikrānta.*

[2157] In Lamotte, the equivalent phrase here states simply that the body of the Tathāgata is unconditioned (**asaṃskṛtakāya*), separated from all conditioned things (*saṃskṛta*).

[2158] 當知阿難。如來法身非思欲身。佛爲世尊過諸世間。佛身無漏諸漏已盡。佛身無數眾行已除, T.474.523c05-07. See Lamotte 187.

The understanding of the *dharmakāya* presented in this passage is neither as extended, nor in as close agreement with other versions of the text, as that seen in our first passage. However, there can be no doubt here, either, that we are similarly dealing with a form of the "classic" *dharmakāya* explicitly so-named.

While Zhi Qian's text does not mention the term *dharmakāya* again, it does also feature related doctrines of embodiment,[2159] some of which we will have occasion to return to elsewhere in this dissertation. The body of the Buddha is like adamant, and all ills have been eliminated from it, so that it is impossible that it be sick.[2160] The Buddhas are equal in respect to their bodies, in close association with which some of the key items from the characterisation of the *dharmakāya* above are listed once more: the five pure aggregates, the eighteen *āveṇikadharmas,* the ten powers, the four assurances;[2161] notably, this same set of qualities in respect of which the Buddhas are equal was to specifically receive the title of *dharmakāya* in the Sarvâstivāda *Vibhāṣā*, as we will see below.[2162]

In sum, then, Zhi Qian's *Vim* presents us with a clearly recognisable and already complex doctrine of the *dharmakāya,* named as such. To my knowledge, this is the earliest text in the Chinese record, and therefore the earliest clearly datable text that I know of, in which we see

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2159 A useful guide to the overall doctrines of embodiment in *Vim* is Lamotte's long n. 39 p. 138. However, it is necessary to check Lamotte's summary against the actual source passages. For example, he misleadingly introduces generalisations about the "corps matériel (*rūpakāya*), corps de rétribution (*vipākakāya*) ou de naissance (*janmakāya*)" which have no basis in the actual text, and most likely derive rather from (in some cases, baseless) generalisations made by his teacher, la Vallée Poussin, as exemplified in "Appendice".

2160 T474.523b24-27; Lamotte Ch. III §43, 185.

2161 T474.533c01-04, Lamotte Ch. X §13, 344-345.

2162 See the key *Vibh* passage at the centre of discussion in §4.4.8.

both the name and the doctrines together in the same place, and it thus represents a significant juncture in the development of body doctrine. There are of course difficulties in assuming too simplistically that the first place in which an item of doctrine first appears in the Chinese context does indeed represent its context of origin. However, this evidence suggests at least the following. First, if this is the earliest evidence for the *dharmakāya* so-named in the Chinese tradition, it means that we have little grounds in any evidence that I know of for assuming that there existed any such concept so-named prior to Zhi Qian (or, allowing some decades for the text he translated to have been composed, the turn of the third century C.E.). In fact, we *do* find prototypical forms of the concepts so labelled in the earlier translations of Lokakṣema, but they are precisely, so far as we can determine, *not* called by the name *dharmakāya;* even in the slightly later translation of Mokṣala, for example, we find the concept but only so-named half the time. These facts suggest that the application of the term *dharmakāya* to these concepts can be fairly closely dated as a product of a process ongoing approximately through the first half of the third century, whether or not *Vimalakīrti* was in fact the first context in which that identification was undertaken.

The term *fashen* 法身 is also found further in an anonymous text which is quite likely nearly as early as, if not earlier than, the Zhi Qian texts studied here, since it is included among the scriptures listed as by unknown translators in Dao'an's catalogue: the 法常住經 ("Scripture on the eternal abiding of the Dharma").[2163] This very short text, as Zürcher has already described it, is a very brief summary of the essential characteristics of the Three Vehicles. The general context of the term in the doctrine of this text, and the specific manner in which the text speaks about its *fashen,* once more make it clear that we are here already dealing with the "classic" Mahāyāna *dharmakāya.* Just as the various rivers have separate names, but all flow

[2163] On this text, see Zürcher, "Obscure Texts" 171.

into one ocean, in which they no longer have those separate identities, so too the *dharmakāya* is one, shared in common by all Buddhas of past, future and present, and the path they practise is also one, but they teach various distinct *dharmas* such as the *skandhas,* the *āyatanas* etc. for the benefit of sentient beings.[2164]

Before we turn to considering what larger patterns we might discern in this evidence and its relation to the findings of other parts of this dissertation, we should briefly survey some evidence from Sanskrit texts.

First, we should note that the term *dharmakāya* is already found in Chapter 3 of the *Ratnâvalī,* attributed to Nāgārjuna. I cite the relevant passage in more detail in §4.5.3 below,[2165] in the context of a survey similar to the one essayed here of the evidence for the earliest occurrence of the term *rūpakāya,* because this passage not only contains the term *dharmakāya,* but opposes it to *rūpakāya.* As I will also note below, this fact seems to make the *Ratnâvalī* something of an anomaly in the period of Nāgārjuna, and I am unsure what to make of the evidence it comprises. For the present, then, we must note it, but I would hesitate to conclude anything too large about the history of body doctrine on its basis.

In the context of the same survey of *rūpakāya* below, I cite a series of passages which also almost uniformly feature the term *dharmakāya* in opposition to *rūpakāya*, in the *Samādhirāja,* the *Divyâvadāna*, the *Kāśyapaparivarta*, and the *Vajracchedikā.*[2166] I will defer more detailed discussion

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[2164] 猶如眾流未到海時各有本名。以合于海無有異號。道德若茲。去來今佛合一法身行與道合。因為眾生分別演說。陰衰諸入十二牽連皆為病疾, T819.834a01-06.

[2165] See p. 998.

[2166] See n. 2219-2223, with the exception of the note on the *Lalitavistara.*

of those passages to the treatment below, where the concept of *dharmakāya* they contain can be considered in its proper articulation with *rūpakāya*. In addition, we should note further passages where the term *dharmakāya* appears, without being paired with *rūpakāya*: once in the *Divyâvadāna*;[2167] once only in the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka*;[2168] once in the *Kāraṇḍavyūha*;[2169] twice in the *Lalitavistara*;[2170] and once in the *Śālistamba-sūtra.*[2171]

As I note analogously of similar *rūpakāya* passages in §4.5.3, in the case of these passages too I know of no firm reasons to believe any of them earlier than the earliest Chinese instances of the term in Zhi Qian. As with the *Kāśyapaparivarta* instance of *rūpakāya*, in the case of the *Śālistamba-sūtra,* the relevant passage is notably missing even where we do have a Chinese version of the text early enough (and by Zhi Qian himself). In the case of the *Lotus Sūtra,* the

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[2167] *na rājan kṛpaṇo loke dharmakāyena saṃspṛśet/ deva tripathanirāśī(?) dhruvaṃ tasya vidhīyate// Divyâvadāna* 37, Vaidya 474.

[2168] *sa paśyati mahāprajño dharmakāyamaśeṣataḥ / nāsti yānatrayaṃ kiṃcidekayānamihāsti tu //* 5.82, Kern and Nanjio 143, Vaidya 96. One who discerns that *dharmas* are like illusions, similar to dreams etc., and who finds all *dharmas* the same, devoid of a variety of natures and appearances, "He, in his great wisdom, sees the whole Dharma-body/ For there is no triad of vehicles, but only the One Vehicle", Hurvitz 119. This verse is not found in the corresponding locus in Kumārajīva and therefore is not in Watson's translation, though the term occurs twice (only) in another place, 深達罪福相/遍照於十方/微妙淨法身/具相三十二/以八十種好/用莊嚴法身/天人所戴仰/龍神咸恭敬, T262.35b28-c02, Watson 187; it is similarly missing from Dharmarakṣa.

[2169] *adya me pariśodhito bodhimārgaḥ / sa cetanasadharmakāyanirvāṇopadarśakam,* Vaidya, *Mahāyāna-sūtra-saṃgraha* 304; *bodhimārggasacetasaṃ dharmmakāyan nirvvāṇopadarśakaṃ// atha sarvvaṇīvaraṇaviṣkambhīn . . .* Mette 137; in the Gilgit version it appears the term *dharmakāya* is missing, *sucetasaṃ yan mayā darśitaṃ . . .* Mette 136.

[2170] *atha khalu bhikṣavo dharmaruciśca nāmā bodhivṛkṣadevatā dharmakāyaśca dharmamatiśca dharmacārī ca . . .* Vaidya 293; in a somewhat odd passage, *dharmakāyajñānaśarīratvān mahādruma ityucyate,* Vaidya 310.

[2171] *tatra katamo buddho bhagavān. yaḥ sarvadharmāvabodhād buddha ucyate, sa āryaprajñānetraḥ* [*~cakṣur* VP] *dharmakāyasamanvitaḥ śaikṣāśaikṣadharmānimān paśyati,* Vaidya, *Mahāyāna-sūtra-saṃgraha* Part 1, 100; see also for var. reconstruction la Vallée Poussin, *Théorie des douze causes* 72. "In that [connection], what is the Buddha, the Blessed One? He who, being called 'Buddha' because [he] knows all *dharmas,* by means of the eye of noble discriminating insight and the body consisting of *dharma*(*s*), sees those *dharmas* of that which enlightens, the learner, and the learned", Schoening I, 237. Nothing corresponding, however, appears in Zhi Qian's 了本生死經 T708 (which may not actually be by Zhi Qian in any case; see n. 959); in the anonymous Jin (317-420) version of the text the passage is found thus: 云何是佛。能覺一切法。故名爲佛。若以慧眼見真法身。能成菩提所學之法, T709.817a08-10.

term is missing from the single context in which it appears even in down to the much later version of Kumārajīva. The single exception to these considerations is the anomalous *Ratnâvalī* passage, in which *rūpakāya* also occurs (a fact which, as we shall see below, makes it even more anomalous at this date). Setting aside for a moment the anomaly of *Ratnâvalī,* perhaps the most striking fact about this Sanskrit evidence is that the term *dharmakāya* is so difficult to find, even in seminal early Mahāyāna texts like the *Lotus Sūtra,* and that even in those scriptures where it does occur, it plays such a marginal role in the text, featuring usually only once or twice per text.

While it is difficult to conclude anything positive about the doctrinal context in which the term was first so applied on the basis of the evidence to hand, it is possible, I believe, to draw some significant negative conclusions.

Recall once more, first, that we have already seen above that the slender evidence prior scholars have adduced for the **dhammakāya* in the Pāli canon is not, in fact, to be taken as evidence for the presence of the concept in any form recognisable to us from later historical contexts, and that the single instance found there is difficult to interpret, but quite possibly a nonce formation of little considered doctrinal significance in its original context. To this we can now add further observations.

First, even if we cannot be sure that *Vimalakīrti* was in fact the original context in which this identification was made, the fact that it is so clearly made in Zhi Qian's version of that text, and yet only haltingly and half-heartedly in Mokṣala, suggests strongly that it is wrong to assume, as has sometimes been assumed by prior scholars, that the "classic" Mahāyāna conception of

dharmakāya is somehow particularly closely associated with the Prajñāpāramitā context in its early history. We simply do not have any evidence that would make us believe this is true.

Moreover, as we have already seen above (in Ch. 4.4), there are strong reasons to doubt that the Sarvâstivāda had any strong interest in problems of embodiment prior to the *Vibhāṣā* itself, and we have no reasons to confidently assume that portions of the *Vibhāṣā* relevant to doctrines of embodiment pre-date the Zhi Qian materials treated here. We are thus also not justified in assuming, as some other prior scholarship has done, that the Sarvâstivāda Abhidharma is a likely scene of origin for the (or an) early concept of *dharmakāya*.

Further, we will see immediately below (in §4.5.3) that soon after the time of Zhi Qian, in the works of Dharmarakṣa, attestations of the concept of *dharmakāya* so-named are suddenly quite numerous. These instances, also, belong to a period of doctrinal history which cannot be clearly shown to post-date Sarvâstivāda, and the conception of *dharmakāya* we see in them is in many respects more developed and clearly articulated than what we see in the contemporaneous Prajñāpāramitā as evidenced by Mokṣala's *Pañca*. Yet, these instances are also from a range of doctrinal contexts quite different to either the Prajñāpāramitā or the Sarvâstivāda Abhidharma, and if anything is prominent among them, it is in fact the proto-*Avataṃsaka* literature.

Thus, when we expand our horizon a few decades beyond this first instance of the *dharmakāya* so-named in Zhi Qian, we find that it is plentifully attested in the works of more than one translator and works of more than one doctrinal stream, and that even so, there are no grounds for assuming that the centre of gravity is in either of the two doctrinal contexts (Prajñāpāramitā and Sarvâstivāda) that scholars have usually looked to, beyond the Pāli canon,

in the search for the origins of the *dharmakāya*. While we may not have enough evidence to conclude firmly where the *dharmakāya* did in fact come from, therefore, it seems to me that we have enough evidence to conclude that the received accounts of its origin are most likely wrong. We can at least conclude honestly, on the basis of this evidence from the Chinese canon, that the origins of the notion of *dharmakāya* remain a mystery, and therefore comprise an important open question for future research, even if it is not necessarily one to which we can be sure we will ever have a certain answer.

4.5.3 Towards the date and provenance of the concept of *rūpakāya* in opposition to the *dharmakāya*

We have seen above that *rūpakāya* as a body of the Buddha in fact appears only extremely rarely in the Sarvâstivāda, in a sense different to the classic *rūpakāya* usually opposed to the *dharmakāya,* and further, that Sarvâstivāda Abhidharma texts down to the *Vibhāṣā* in fact oppose to the *dharmakāya* rather a "body of birth" or "body born of father and mother". It is certainly the case, however, that some Buddhist texts *did* speak of the *rūpakāya* as a body of the Buddha. When did they begin doing so, and where?

Considerations of time and space have made it impossible, within the scope of the present study, to engage in a full study of this question. My limited goals in the following will therefore be only as follows: (1) to identify the earliest significant instances of the term *rūpakāya* as predicated of the Buddha, predating the **Mahāvibhāṣā* (in the Chinese record); and (2) to consider the implications the pattern of distribution of those instances might have for the likely provenance of this conception.

We must note, first, that no *rūpakāya* is predicated as body of the Buddha in the Pāli canon.[2172] In fact, in the entirety of the canon, the term *rūpakāya* only occurs (three times) in a single context,[2173] in DN 15 the *Mahānidāna-sutta*. In this context, it is opposed to *nāmakāya;* in other words, it names specifically the *nāma* pole of the *nāmarūpa* rubric for analysing human being (as ideas, words, mind *nāma* vs. body *rūpa*). Walshe translates it "body-*factor*", versus "mind-*factor*" for *nāmakāya*;[2174] Rhys Davids translates "*aggregate* called [bodily] form" versus "*aggregate* called name"[2175] (my emphases). As both translators clearly understood, the term *kāya* in these compounds clearly does not refer to "body" in the sense in which the term enters into the later understanding of the *rūpakāya* as a body of the Buddha, that is, as a physical human body. We note further that insofar as the pair of terms at play here is *nāmarūpa,* the apparently nonce-formation *rūpakāya* does not refer to anything that pertains specially to a Buddha, but rather to something held in common by all sentient beings. Thus, *rūpakāya* here does not refer to a "body" in the sense in which we are studying bodies in this dissertation, and it also does not refer to any special property of the Buddha. We are safe, therefore, in concluding that the Pāli canon does not expound any *rūpakāya* as a body of the Buddha. This means that wherever the conception of the Buddha having a *rūpakāya* comes from, it must postdate the Pāli canon (or come from sources outside it, even where those sources perhaps reflect ideas that are

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[2172] Despite this fact, we occasionally see statements by secondary scholars that seem to imagine that *rūpakāya* does date back to the Pāli canon. For instance, a scholar as formidable as Heinz Bechert is still capable of saying, "the concept of the three kāyas or 'bodies' of a Buddha in Mahāyāna doctrine seems to be based upon the concept of two kāyas, rūpakāya and dharmakāya, *in early Buddhist sūtras*" (my emphasis), in a context where he is discussing Pāli (and not Āgama) sources; Bechert, "Notes on the formation" 14.

[2173] Once more we are confronted with the problem of what to do with a single extraordinary instance; see §1.3.7.

[2174] Walshe 225; see also 564 n. 336, 337.

[2175] Rhys Davids, *Dialogues* 58-59.

ultimately as old as things in the Pāli canon but were perhaps separated from it by geographic and/or sectarian boundaries).

On the other hand, we have already seen clearly above that the *rūpakāya* is predicated of the Buddha, and in opposition to the identification of the Buddha with *dharmatā* (though not yet quite *dharmakāya*) as we would expect in light of the usual secondary statements about "two-body" theory, as early as Mokṣala's *Pañca* in 280 C.E.[2176] This gives us a clear and relatively tightly focused chronological range in which to focus our investigations. Can we find other instances of the *rūpakāya* predicated of the Buddha, ideally in opposition to the *dharmakāya,* as early or earlier than Mokṣala? In addressing this question, it seems that a good first approximation is to survey the translations of four major early translators into Chinese – An Shigao, Lokakṣema, Zhi Qian and Dharmarakṣa.[2177]

The term *seshen* = **rūpakāya* is found, but not in opposition to *dharmakāya*, right back to the beginning of the Chinese canon. In many of these instances, it is not even predicated of the Buddha. For example, it occurs in the works of An Shigao as a term characterising the body of some ordinary sentient beings;[2178] or to refer, as in DN 15, to *rūpa* as a member of the dyad of *nāmarūpa*.[2179]

The earliest instance I can find of *rūpakāya* attributed to the Buddha is in Lokakṣema's *Wenshushili wen pusa shu jing*, dating to sometime between 168 and 188 C.E., where the term is

[2176] See above p. 786.

[2177] For a similar research method and its limitations, see below, Ch. 5.3 on "Immortal Embodiments", and especially n. 2322.

[2178] T13.236b26-27.

[2179] T14.243b08-12, T1508.53b08-09.

not yet in opposition to the *dharmakāya,* but occurs in very close proximity to *dharma,* and further in a slightly "Vakkali"-like context involving the question of "seeing" the Buddha. In the context of a discourse redolent of *prajñāpāramitā*,[2180] the passage in question reads:[2181]

> "For this reason, [the practitioner] detaches himself from desirous states of mind; he detaches himself from subtle states of mind (微妙之心[2182]); he detaches himself [even] from wholeheartedness (?盡心[2183]) [he] thinks only of seeing the Buddha's **rūpakāya*; he thinks only of seeing the *dharma*; he thinks only of seeing the *bhikkhusaṃgha;* he detaches himself from the benefit (?功德) of the five *skandhas,* detaches himself from the benefit of the four gross elements, detaches himself from the benefit of the six 'ruin[ous' objects of the senses] (六衰), and detaches himself from the benefit of the twelve members of the chain of dependent origination; [for] all such states of mind are not conducive to (不應, more lit. 'do not befit, do not match') the stage(s)/station(s) (署[2184]) of the Tathāgata."[2185]

[2180] As noted also by Harrison, following Zürcher, "Earliest Chinese Translations" 162.

[2181] The usual difficulties in translating Lokakṣema's translation idiom are compounded here by the fact that this "enigmatic text", which "may . . . be one of the most primitive Mahāyāna sūtras which we possess", is the only extant version of this text; see Harrison, "Earliest Chinese Translations", 161-162. In addition, the terminology used, especially the notion of the "rank" *shu* of the Tathāgata (怛薩阿竭署) (or the *bodhisattva*) seems to be unique to this text also.

[2182] For 微妙之心, see e.g. **udāracitta*? Cf. Dharmarakṣa's *Pañca* T222.180c29-81a07, corresponding to Dutt, *Pañca* 170-171; Conze, *Large Sutra* 124-125 (Conze translates "sublime thought"). For *udāra,* cf. MW s.v. *udāra,* "noble, lofty, exalted"; Ch. here is *weimiao* "subtle" 微妙. Different from (indeed, in Ch. almost opposite to!) BHS *udāra* "coarse" (= P. *uḷāra, oḷārika*), Edg. s.v. *udāra.*

[2183] *Jinxin* 盡心 usually means "wholehearted(ly)" etc., and is a positive term describing someone who dedicates themselves wholeheartedly to practice; to the service of Buddhas, one's parents, sentient beings; etc. I cannot find the same threefold typology given here elsewhere, but note that e.g. in the *Pañca* passage given above, "subtle/noble states of mind" (*weimiao zhi xin, udāracitta*) are defined in part as involving the transcendence of desire (and other baser mental states like hatred etc.), and the text goes on to speak of other states of mind proper to the *bodhisattva* such as "direct[ing] . . . though towards the benefit and ease of all beings". I thus take it that our present text is lining up three ranked states of mind, and saying that the *bodhisattva* goes beyond or is unattached to even the highest of these, in the manner that *Pañca* says formulaically of each of the intermediate states of mind that "he does not put his mind to that" (Conze), *tena ca cittena na manyate*; like the present text, *Pañca* goes on immediately to contrast these lesser if worthy states of mind with dedication to supramundane ideals, i.e. in *Pañca* "constant liking for Dharma, a delight in Dharma, fondness for Dharma" etc., *dharmarāga . . . dharmarata . . . dharmārāmatā . . .*

[2184] The word *shu* seems in this text to have the sense of "stage" or "rank", which is one gloss it is given more than once by the *Yiqie jing yin yi*; see T2128.358a07, 432c12. The attempt to convey the idea of "rank" via the Chinese terminology of bureaucratic status is clear within the present text when it glosses the term by saying 怛薩阿竭署者。如所署審。如所署署不可數特尊之署已住怛薩阿竭阿羅呵三耶三佛陀。已法教是爲四署, T458.435c01-04. Harrison proposes that the term 怛薩阿竭署 might be reconstructed **tathāgatacaryā,* i.e. "Tathāgata practices". The text proposes at least two typologies of these "stages/ranks" (*shu*) of the Tathāgata, one fourfold and one twofold: (1) (i) the arousing of

While not everything is clear in this difficult passage, for our present purposes, the salient points are unmistakeable. Correct *bodhisattva* practice involves detachment from all worldly goals and indeed all intentional modes of thought ("intentional" in the sense that they aim to achieve a certain purposive goal), and a single-minded focus on the Three Gems (*triratna*); and within the frame of the *triratna, the buddharatna is understood in terms of the* **rūpakāya*. This is a remarkable understanding, diametrically opposed to the understanding of the Buddha as the object of the ritual act of refuge-taking precisely as *dharmakāya* that we observed above in *Vibh.*[2186] It is also a use of the term *rūpakāya* that we have not yet encountered elsewhere. These anomalous features may indicate that the doctrine we see here dates from a period in which the notion of *rūpakāya* itself was yet in the forging, and its value was negotiable. Nonetheless, despite these unusual features, it appears most likely that here we do indeed see a use of the term *rūpakāya,* in which case we must acknowledge that it dates at least as early as Lokakṣema.

Other than this single instance,[2187] where the term further has this unusual meaning, we do not find the term *seshen* = **rūpakāya* in the Chinese canon before Dharmarakṣa.[2188] In Dharmarakṣa,

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bodhicitta; (ii) the attainment of 'non-backsliding' (阿惟越致, **avaivartika*); (iii) sitting as *bodhisattva* under the [*bodhi*] tree; (iv) full attainment of the *buddhadharma*(s?) (435b21-24); (2) (i) the *śrāvaka's* turning of the wheel of the Dharma; (ii) the 'non-backsliding' (**avaivartika*) turning of the wheel of Dharma (435c04-06). The first, fourfold typology seems to correspond roughly to what is (in a manner more intuitively understandable) referred to elsewhere as "stations" or "types" of the *bodhisattva*, as at T400.509a12-14, T397.67a04-06: there, however, only two of the four stages match the typology here, since the rubric is (i) arousing of *bodhicitta*; (ii) *bodhisattva* practices; (iii) *avaivartika*; (iv) (penultimate) birth (in the Tuṣita Heaven) 補處. It is possible, of course, given that Lokakṣema is earlier than these texts, that we see here an earlier form of the doctrine.

2185 T458.437a19-24.

2186 See p. 864.

2187 Once more, we are confronted with the recurrent methodological problem of what to do with the single anomalous instance: see §1.3.7

however, from approximately 270 C.E., the term suddenly begins showing up in relative profusion, not only in isolation, but in direct opposition to *dharmakāya.*

The opposition between *rūpakāya* and *dharmakāya* is in fact found marginally earlier in the Dharmarakṣa corpus than Mokṣala's *Pañca.*[2189] In a somewhat involved discussion of what it means to "see the Buddha" in Dharmarakṣa's **Lokadharaparipṛcchāsūtra*[?], translated in 271,[2190] which is clearly predicated upon a variant on the old "Vakkali" pericope,[2191] the terminological contrast between *dharmakāya* and *rūpakāya* has been introduced, as in Mokṣala's *Pañca*. We also find the *rūpakāya* and *dharmakāya* of the Buddha in Dharmarakṣa's *Vimaladattāparipṛcchā-sūtra*, translated in 289.[2192] This passage, too, riffs on the "Vakkali" notion that to see the Buddha one must see the *dharma,* and expresses this concept through the polarity of the *rūpakāya* and *dharmakāya.*[2193] The opposition is also found, once more in "updated Vakkali" style, in the translation of the *Aśokadattavyākaraṇa* attributed to Dharmarakṣa.[2194] The passage in question states that only fools think they can see the Buddha by means of the *rūpakāya*; the Buddha is

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2188 We find one instance at T530.807b09-10, ascribed to Zhi Qian: 如來得一切種智。色身相好具足成就而不能免. However, Jan Nattier provisionally does not consider the ascription of this text to Zhi Qian most likely supportable; Nattier, "Ten Epithets" 241-242, and personal communication.

2189 We have already seen this contrast at work in Mokṣala above p. 786. Of course, given the few years' difference between these various texts, we would not want to pin any firm conclusions that this or that text represents "the origin" of the opposition between *dharmakāya* and *rūpakāya* in the original Indic context; the order in which they appear in the Chinese record is much more likely to be a product of the vicissitudes of transmission and translation.

2190 T481.628b22-27. On the Skt. title and date of this text, see Boucher diss 279.

2191 For which see above §3.2.3.

2192 For the Skt. title and date of this text, see Boucher, diss., 272-273.

2193 T338.92c20-29. For parallels in other translations, see Nie Daozhen 聶道真 T310.559a20-27 (note that Nie was one of Dharmarakṣa's assistants, so that this translation would be almost as early as Dharmarakṣa himself); T339.101b23-c05 (Prajñaruci). Nie's version has been translated into English in Garma Chang, *Treasury*; for the present passage, see 84.

2194 For this text, see Boucher diss. 284 (#95), 288-289 (#143).

seen through the *dharma,* has the *dharma* for a body (i.e. he is *dharmakāya*) etc.[2195] Elsewhere, somewhat similar passages do not mention the *dharmakāya* overtly, but likewise admonish us not to confuse the Buddha with his *rūpakāya.*[2196]

In addition to these "Vakkali"-like passages, we find the opposition also attested in contexts where a number of other features of the respective bodies are at stake. It is surely of interest that several of these instances occur in what we could broadly call the "proto-*Avataṃsaka*" literature.

Dharmarakṣa's *Du shi pin jing,* corresponding to a chapter of the *Avataṃsaka* and translated in 291,[2197] opposes the *rūpakāya* to the *dharmakāya* thus: "Gods and men attach to the *rūpakāya,* and thus [the Buddha] demonstrates that the *rūpakāya* is impermanent in this manner. The *dharmakāya* endures permanently, without differentiation."[2198]

Somewhat different instances in the Dharmarakṣa corpus notably come from quite a different doctrinal context to the Prajñāpāramitā – Dharmarakṣa's *Daśabhūmika* translation of 297,[2199] where the pairing occurs twice.[2200] Note that DBh also ended up as a chapter in the *Avataṃsaka.*

[2195] T337.86b28-c04.

[2196] 佛無有身亦無形體。莫觀如來有色身也。無相無好。無有經典及與法界。佛不出現亦不常存。未曾滅度亦無所滅, T810.762a14-17. See also T810.765c06-12.

[2197] Boucher diss 266-267.

[2198] T292.653a29-b02: 諸天人民。著於色身。故現色身如是無常。法身常存.

[2199] See Boucher diss. 268-269 for the identification and date of this text.

[2200] Note that a further passage which mentions both *dharmakāya* and *rūpakāya* does not in fact attribute *rūpakāya* to the Tathāgatas: 285.483b11-19.

First, in discussing the accomplishments of the *bodhisattva* of the seventh stage, the text states,[2201]

> "[The *bodhisattva* understands] that the[ir][2202] *dharmakāya* is pure, and [that it] makes a nonsense of the idea of 'coming or going' (壞來至義);[2203] he is able to understand (入, **avatarati*) all the names and epithets of the Buddhas;[2204] [he understands that the Buddhas] possess all the major and minor marks of the *rūpakāya*, and ornament themselves with them; . . . "[2205]

In another passage, the terms feature in a somewhat unclear manner in a discussion of the accomplishments of a *bodhisattva* of the tenth (and final) stage:

> "A *bodhisattva* who dwells in the 'Stage of the Dharma-Cloud' (*dharmameghabhūmi*) understands as it really is (*yathābhūtam*) the realm of desire (*kāmadhātu*); he understands as they really are the realm of form (*rūpa~*), the realm of the formless (*ārūpya~*), the realm of beings (*sattva~*), the realm of no-consciousness [*sic*[2206]], the realm of the conditioned and the unconditioned (*saṃskṛtâsaṃskṛta~*), the realm of space (*ākāśa~*), the realm of *dharma*(s) (*dharmadhātu*),[2207] and [the realm of] *nirvāṇa* (*nirvāṇa~*). He knows the distorting net of views,[2208] the five rebirth destinies, and the defilements (塵勞, *kleśa*); he understands arising and extinction;[2209] [he understands] the practices

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[2201] In translating these and following passages, I translate in light of the Sanskrit and Kumārajīva parallels, and allow myself to read the Chinese as I take it to be intended in light of those parallels, rather than translating as I might if I were reading the text in isolation; however, where the meaning of the Chinese cannot be construed to match the parallels, I translate what Dharmarakṣa seems to be saying.

[2202] Skt. has *prakṛtidharmakāyatāṃ . . . sarvabuddhānām.*

[2203] This latter phrase is missing in both Skt. and Kumārajīva. For the idea of the *dharmakāya* neither coming nor going in early Prajñāpāramitā texts, see e.g. above p. 754 (in Lokakṣema), p. 785 (in Mokṣala).

[2204] This phrase is also missing in parallel texts.

[2205] T285.479a08-12, Rahder 55, Honda 200. See also Kumārajīva, T286.517b19-23.

[2206] 無識之界; Skt. has *vijñānadhātu.*

[2207] This item appears first in the list of types of *dhātu* in Skt.

[2208] 邪網遮羅; I suspect this may be a redundant translation-transcription pair, with *zheluo* 遮羅 for Skt. *jala* "net"; but it would make equal sense, of course, to read *zheluo* (almost equally redundantly) for its sense, the "obscuring mesh/skein".

[2209] My translation of the entire sentence to this point is tentative, and the relations between Ch. and Skt. are not immediately obvious to me: 曉知諸見邪網遮羅五趣塵勞。習諸生滅; *dṛṣṭikṛtakleśasamudāgamaṃ ca yathābhūtaṃ prajānāti / lokadhātupravṛttinivṛttisamudāgamaṃ ca.* This minor textual problem does not immediately impinge upon points directly of relevance to our study here, and so I have not endeavoured further to resolve it.

> of the *śrāvakas,* the practices of *pratyekabuddhas,* and the practices of *bodhisattvas*; he understands the *rūpakāya* and *dharmakāya* of the Tathāgata(s), comprising the ten powers and four confidences (如來十力四無所畏色身法身);[2210] [he understands] omniscience, and the perfection of *anuttarasaṃuyaksaṃbodhi* and turning of the wheel of Dharma in order to show it [to beings] and [thereby] save them . . . "[2211]

It is not entirely clear what might be meant by saying that the eighteen *āveṇikadharmas,* which is surely intended here by this abbreviated list, comprise the *rūpakāya* as well as the *dharmakāya*, and yet this is clearly what is meant, given the word order in both Sanskrit and Chinese, as well as the structure of the large compound in Sanskrit (which admits less than the looser Chinese, perhaps, of a construal whereby the text somehow means "the *dharmakāya* comprising the *āveṇikadharma* and the *rūpakāya*). This confusion, at least from the anachronistic perspective of later doctrine, may indeed be a sign that we are dealing here with a nascent phase of the opposition between the two concepts, in which their identities and distinguishing features are not yet as stable as they were to become later on. But regardless of these complications, it is clear here that we are dealing already with a twofold model of *dharmakāya* and *rūpakāya* in some sense, and further, that *dharmakāya* is already here (as, vaguely, in Mokṣala's Prajñāpāramitā) associated with the eighteen *āveṇikadharma.*

In Dharmarakṣa's translation of the *Tathāgatôtpattisaṃbhavanirdeśa* of 292,[2212] which also ended up being incorporated as a chapter in the *Avataṃsaka,* we find *rūpakāya and *dharmakāya* spoken of in the same context, but again, in a manner somewhat unusual from the perspective of what we usually think about the doctrine. The Tathāgata is compared to a miraculous purifying medicine called *Sudarśana (善見): seeing his *seshen* = **rūpakāya* purifies the eye; hearing [his]

[2210] Skt. adds here "the *rūpakāya* and *dharmakāya* of the Tathāgatas, comprising *the qualities unique to a Buddha,* [viz.] the ten powers, four confidences [etc.]": *tathāgatabalavaiśāradyāveṇikabuddhadharma-rūpakāyadharmakāyasamudāgamaṃ ca.*

[2211] T285.491a09-22, Rahder 86, Honda 264. For the Kumārajīva parallel see T286.529b05-12.

[2212] Boucher diss 276.

samādhi (三昧) with the ear (?*sic*) leads to clarity of hearing; smelling the fragrance of his moral action (*śīla*, 戒) purifies the nose; savouring the taste of his *dharma* satiates sentient beings; and if one hears his exposition, one's tongue is purified and attains limitless eloquence; moreover, if one encounters the "light" of the Tathāgata, one attains the *dharmakāya* (若有遭遇如來光明便得法身).[2213] A number of features here are unusual, including especially that the *dharmakāya* is attained by the postulant rather than being predicated directly of the Tathāgata himself. Further, the obviously allegorical (and slightly forced) fit between aspects of the religion and the six senses makes us suspect that **rūpakāya* is perhaps here meant less as a technical term than in the rough sense of "the object of sight comprised by his body". Nonetheless, it is also possible that the forced fit here results partly from an attempt to foist the twofold notion of these bodies onto the Procrustean bed of the six-senses allegory, and that the passage therefore at least attests, once more, that the twofold body model was already current by this time, even if here we see a somewhat *ad hoc* use of it.

The term *rūpakāya* also occurs a number of times in Dharmarakṣa's translations without being opposed to *dharmakāya*. None of these instances would add enough to our picture of the emergence of the concept to warrant examining them in detail here,[2214] though they add to the overall picture of a concept which is already current and quite widespread.

In sum, then: the term **rūpakāya* is only found once as a body of the Buddha, and then in a somewhat anomalous application, in the Chinese canon prior to Dharmarakṣa and Mokṣala, in a text translated by Lokakṣema. From approx. 270 C.E., however, the term suddenly appears

[2213] T291.612c25-613a11

[2214] T291.595c02-03; T292.633b25-26; T598.146b15-17; T606.226b15-17; T635.492a07-14.

more than a dozen times, in almost as many texts (including not just the Dharmarakṣa passages listed here, but also the two passages in Mokṣala already studied earlier). In these texts, *rūpakāya* usually appears in opposition to the *dharmakāya,* but sometimes appears in opposition to a generic "body of the Buddha"; in Mokṣala, in opposition to **dharmatā*; and sometimes alone. While one or two of these passages express ideas we might find relatively unusual (from a retrospective that we should recall might be somewhat anachronistic), many elements of the familiar doctrine of these bodies are already in place: the relation to the old "Vakkali" conceit that "to see *dharma* is to see the Buddha"; the idea that the Buddha "manifests" *rūpakāya* at will; the association between *dharmakāya* and the eighteen *āveṇikadharma*; the association of the marks with the *rūpakāya*; that *dharmakāya* is permanent, but *rūpakāya* impermanent; and so on.

It is further worth our while to note, that in all of these passages, the question of the *purity* or otherwise of the Buddha's *rūpakāya,* and the related questions of its fallibility, its inadequacy, and so forth, does not feature at all. This, we might note, is despite the fact that in the context of Zhi Qian's *Vimalakīrti,* where we saw the concept of *dharmakāya* emerges motivated by precisely such questions: the pretended sickness of Vimalakīrti, or the apparent infirmity of the Buddha himself, are the occasion of the discourse, and the point of these passages is that the Buddha cannot *really* get sick, because his true body is an entirely different body than the vulnerable, corruptible one we see before us with our ordinary mortal eyes. Rather, despite their variations, the central problem that preoccupies the texts in the early *rūpakāya* passages is rather the "Vakkali" problem of *darśan* of the Buddha, that is, of the means by which it is possible to most veritably have the *sight* of the Buddha, and the related problem of the body of marks, that is, of the visible blazons by which a true Buddha may be recognised visually as such.

By contrast, we have seen that the problem of the purity of the Buddha's body, its fallibility, its weakness, and so forth – in short, its limitations, its inadequacy, and its worldliness – is centrally at issue in many of the passages in which the Sarvâstivāda Abhidharma, as represented by the *Vibhāṣā,* explore the nature and qualities of the "body of birth". This contrast further gives the lie to the assumption in secondary scholarship to date that the Sarvâstivāda teach a doctrine of *rūpakāya,* and far more so to the idea that they are the originators of such a doctrine. *Rūpakāya* and "body of birth", far from being simple interchangeable synonyms for "the same" body of the Buddha, are rather very specific terms that reflect preoccupation with entirely different problematics, viz. attaining true vision of the Buddha, on the one hand, and whether or not he is truly of the world and therefore tainted by it, on the other. We will return to this key distinction momentarily.

On the basis of the Chinese record, then, we can state with certainty that the concept of the *rūpakāya* as a body of the Buddha, and the opposition between it and the *dharmakāya,* dates at least to the middle of the third century at the latest. Further, given that *rūpakāya* appears within a short space of time in the works of two translators, and in quite a range of texts from various currents of doctrine, including the proto-*Avataṃsaka* and Prajñāpāramitā, we can conclude that by this time it must have already attained quite a broad currency.

Before I turn to broader conclusions on the basis of this material, and in particular to the task of relating it back to old stereotypes that held that the *dharmakāya-rūpakāya* opposition was a Sarvâstivāda innovation, we must weigh against the evidence reviewed thus far from the Chinese record some slight pieces of possibly ambiguous evidence from the Indic record.

First, and most importantly, we should note that the opposition between *dharmakāya* and *rūpakāya* appears twice in the third chapter of the *Ratnâvalī* attributed to Nāgārjuna:[2215]

> "When the causes of even the Form Body (*rūpakāya*)
> Of a Buddha are immeasurable
> As the world, how then could the causes
> Of the Body of Truth (*dharmakāya*) be measured?"[2216]
>
> "The Form Body (*rūpakāya*) of a Buddha
> Arises from collected merit,
> The Body of Truth (*dharmakāya*) in brief, O King,
> Arises from collected wisdom."[2217]

It is difficult to know what to make of this reference. I do not know of any opinion that doubts the attribution of *Ratnâvalī,* or even this chapter (which, unlike much of the work, is not extant in Sanskrit) to Nāgārjuna; both Lindtner and Hahn consider the attribution reliable. On the other hand, the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā,* for instance, does not even mention the *dharmakāya* once, let alone oppose it to the *rūpakāya.*[2218] I will not try to draw any firm conclusions about the provenance of this text here, but neither, given the fact that it appears as an isolated anomaly in the pattern otherwise shown by our record, will I risk building upon it any firm conclusions about the larger history of body doctrine. Suffice it to note that the concept is found here, and that if the attribution to Nāgārjuna is accurate, this may well be the earliest mention of the opposition between *dharmakāya* and *rūpakāya* in our record.

[2215] Nagao, "On the Theory" 30 n. 7. Nagao refers to MMK 22 for the two-body theory of *rūpakāya* and *dharmakāya* in Nāgārjuna. However, not only do these terms not appear in this chapter, they appear nowhere in the entire text, and indeed, no discussion of the Buddha's body (*kāya*) features in the text.

[2216] 3.10; Hopkins et al., *Precious Garland* 48. *gang tshe sangs rgyas gzugs sku yi/ rgyu yang de ltar 'jig rten bzhin/ gzhal med de tshe chos sku yi/ rgyu lta ji ltar gzhal du yod,* Hahn I, 74. No Skt. extant. 諸佛色身因/尚如世無量/況佛法身因/而當有邊際, T1656.498a15-16.

[2217] 3.12., Hopkins et al., *Precious Garland* 49. *sangs rgyas rnams kyi gzugs sku ni/ bsod nams tshogs las byung ba ste/ chos kyi sku ni mdor bsdu na/ rgyal po ye shes tshogs las 'khrungs/,* Hahn I, 74. No Skt. extant. 諸佛有色身/皆從福行起/ 大王佛法身/由智慧行成, T1656.498a19-20).

[2218] *Pace* Nagao; see n. 2215.

Other examples of *rūpakāya* known to me from possibly relatively early Sanskrit texts are of more uncertain date: numerous instances in the *Samādhirāja*;[2219] three mentions in the *Divyâvadāna*;[2220] once in the *Kāśyapaparivarta*;[2221] once in the *Lalitavistara*;[2222] several times in one

[2219] *yo dharmakāye bhavati pratiṣṭhito abhāva jānāti sa sarvabhāvān/ abhāvasaṃjñāya vibhāvitāya na rūpakāyena jinendra paśyati //, Samādhirāja* 4.15, Vaidya 21. *sa ākāṅkṣan dharmakāyato 'pi tathāgataṃ nopalabhate, kimaṅga punā rūpakāyata upalapsyate,* Vaidya 30. *tasmāt tarhi kumāra bodhisattvena mahāsattvena na rūpakāyatas tathāgataḥ prajñātavyaḥ | tat kasya hetoḥ? dharmakāyā hi buddhā bhagavanto dharmakāyaprabhāvitāś ca na rūpakāyaprabhāvitāḥ;* Vaidya 143; "Therefore, o Kumāra, a Bodhisattva-Mahāsattva who strives for this *samādhi* and wishes to attain the Supreme Enlightenment speedily, must not conceive the true nature of the Tathāgata in the aspect of the Material Body (*rūpakāyatas*). – For what reason? – Because the true nature of the Buddhas is their Absolute Body (*dharmakāyaprabhāvitas*) and not the Material Body (*rūpakāyaprabhāvitas*);" Régamey 85; *dharmakāyo mahāvīro dharmeṇa kāya nirjito* [*sic*; see Régamy 93 n. 206] */na jātu rūpakāyeṇa śakyaṃ prajñāpituṃ jino //,* 22.22, Vaidya 145; "The Great Hero is identical with the Absolute Body (*dharmakāya*), born of *dharma* is his body; the Victorious One cannot be conceived in the aspect of the Material Body (*rūpakāya*);" Régamey 93. *apy acintyanirdeśo rūpakāyaparinispattyā | na sukaraṃ sadevakenāpi lokena kāyasya pramāṇamudgrahītumanyatra sarvākārairacintyaḥ aprameyaḥ ||* Vaidya 145; "As for the Material Body (*rūpakāya*) in its full perfection, it would not be easy to find in the world including even the gods a definition for this Body, unless one describes it as inconceivable and undefinable in all its aspects;" Régamey 94. Chapter 22, from which these three passages are drawn, contains much of interest on bodies. *paśyitvā kāyu buddhasya vakṣyante dṛṣṭu nāyakaḥ / na cāhaṃ rūpakāyena paśyituṃ śakya kenacit // jñātaḥ svabhāvo rūpasya yādṛśaṃ rūpalakṣaṇam / rūpasvabhāvamājñāya kāyo mama nideśitaḥ // evaṃ pañcāna skandhānāṃ jñānaṃ me dharmalakṣaṇam / jñātvā svabhāvaṃ dharmāṇāṃ dharmakāye pratiṣṭhitaḥ // deśemi dharma sattvānāṃ dharmakāye 'pyaniḥsṛtaḥ / na ca dharmata buddhānāṃ śakyaṃ vācāya bhāṣitum //* 24.7-24.10, Vaidya 151. *avigraho hyayaṃ dharmo vigraho nātra kaścana / avigrahaśca yo dharma eṣa buddhasya vigrahaḥ // dharmakāyena paśyanti ye te paśyanti nāyakam / dharmakāyā hi saṃbuddhā etat saṃbuddhadarśanam //* 32.31-32, Vaidya 197. *rūpakāyaparinispattiṃ ca tasya bhikṣodṛṣṭvā atīva roṣamakārṣīt*, Vaidya 239. On the date of *Samādhirāja,* see Vaidya viii, Régamey –10, 11-12.

[2220] Twice in *Divyâvadāna* 1: *dṛṣṭo mayopādhyāyānubhāvena sa bhagavān dharmakāyena, no tu rūpakāyena/ gacchāmi upādhyāya, rūpakāyenāpi taṃ bhagavantaṃ drakṣyāmi*; "I have beheld you, my spiritual preceptor, and I have beheld the Lord in the body of his doctrines (*dharmakāyena*), but never in his physical form (*rūpakāyena*). I wish to go, too, O preceptor; I wish to behold the Lord also in his physical form;" Tatelman, *Heavenly Exploits* 84-85. *Divyâvadāna* 26: *yad ahaṃ varṣaśataparinirvṛte bhagavati pravrajitaḥ, taddharmakāyo mayā tasya dṛṣṭaḥ/ trailokyanāthasya kāñcanādrinibhastasya na dṛṣṭo rūpakāyo me/ tadanu tvamanugrahamapratimimiha vidarśaya buddhavigraham.* This second passage is the same tradition about Māra and Upagupta mentioned in n. 1837 above. We saw there that this latter tradition appears in the **Mahāvibhāṣā,* which gives us a (late-ish) *terminus ad quem,* though not one early enough to count for present purposes.

[2221] *dharmato 'pi tathāgataṃ na samanupaśyati kaḥ punar vāda rūpakāyena;* M.I. Vorobyova-Desyatovskaya (in collaboration with S. Karashima and N. Kudo), *The Kāśyapaparivarta, Romanized Text and Facsimiles* (Tokyo 2002), fol. 62v.1-2. "He does not look at the *tathāgata* even with regard to the absolute; how much less in respect of his bodily appearance;" Pāsādika, "Dharma Discourse (VIII)", 34. " . . . er den Tathāgata nicht einmal unter der Form der Lehre erschaut, wieviel weniger unter körperlicher Gestalt;" Weller, *Zum* Kāśyapaparivarta II, 134. It may be significant that the translation of this text attributed to Lokakṣema, T350 (for which see Harrison, "Earliest Chinese Translations" 162-166; see, however, n. for an oddity in the terminology of this text in comparison to that of Lokakṣema's *Aṣṭa*) does not use any term that refers to a bodily conceit, but rather simply says, "They are not even attached to the *dharma* of the Buddha; how much the less would they be continually attached to form?" 於佛法亦不著。何況常著色, T350.193a01-

short passage in the *Vajracchedikā.*[2223] However, I do not know of any strong reasons to believe that a specific passage in any of these Sanskrit texts is earlier than Dharmarakṣa, in the one case where we have an earlier Chinese translation of one of these texts to check against, it seems indeed that the term *rūpakāya* found its way into the text somewhat later.[2224] The *Ratnâvalī* thus comprises the only exception known to me to the pattern observable in the Chinese record.

Given that the concept of *rūpakāya* appears so suddenly in the Chinese record in such a range of doctrinal contexts, and the fact that it nonetheless also appears in the apparently earlier (and perhaps therefore somewhat anomalous) third chapter of *Ratnâvalī,* it does not seem that we can draw any confident conclusions from these facts about its origin and provenance. The following considerations are therefore provisional, and this is an area in which future research is particularly required.

It does seem that there is a centre of gravity in our materials in what we might call the proto-*Avataṃsaka* literature. Of course, we cannot take it for granted, just because these various

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02. By the time we reach the anonymous Qin translation, however, we do find the term *rūpakāya* in the same passage, 如法者不見如來況有色身, T351.198c22-24; if this text is from the early part of the Qin, that would place it early enough to rank with our Dharmarakṣa translations, but not earlier.

[2222] *atha khalu bhikṣavaḥ kāmadhātvīśvarāṇāṃ devakanyānāṃ bodhisattvasya rūpakāyapariniṣpattiṃ,* Vaidya 36.

[2223] *tat kiṃ manyase subhūte rūpakāyapariniṣpattyā tathāgato draṣṭavyaḥ? subhūtir āha - no hīdaṃ bhagavan | na rūpakāyapariniṣpattyā tathāgato draṣṭavyaḥ | tat kasya hetoḥ? rūpakāyapariniṣpattī rūpakāyapariniṣpattir iti bhagavan apariniṣpattir eṣā tathāgatena bhāṣitā | tenocyate rūpakāyapariniṣpattir iti ||* Vaidya, *Mahāyānasūtrasaṃgraha* Part 1, 86; Schopen, " Manuscript of the *Vaj*" 103-104; "'What do you think, Subhūti? Should the Tathāgata be seen through the perfect development of his physical body [*rūpakāya*]?' He said: 'No Blessed One. It is not through the perfect development of his physical body that the Tathāgata is to be seen. And why is that? "A perfect development of the physical body, a perfect development of the physical body", that is said to be not a perfect development by the Tathāgata. In that sense "perfect development of the physical body" is used;'" Schopen 127.

[2224] See n. 2221.

materials ended up included in the same compendious text at a later date, that they necessarily had any doctrinal coherence earlier, and thus this may not represent anything more than a curious coincidence. However, we can certainly note that the earliest evidence thus does not give any support for the idea that the notion of *rūpakāya,* or the twofold opposition between it and the *dharmakāya,* is derived from any Mainstream context. Quite to the contrary, all the materials in which we find it here, without exception, are Mahāyāna materials. This makes it possible, if not likely, that *rūpakāya,* at least, is a Mahāyāna innovation, and likewise, so is the contrast between it and *dharmakāya* ,and therefore the "two-body" model of the Buddha's embodiments.

In §4.5.2 immediately above, we traced the first emergence of the *dharmakāya* so-named in the Chinese record to the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa* of Zhi Qian. With the further results we now have in hand about the advent soon thereafter of the *rūpakāya* in opposition to the *dharmakāya,* it is possible for us here to consider the problem of how much we can know, on the basis of our evidence, about the relative chronology and dynamics in the emergence of these concepts, and also consider plausible conclusions about their place in the overall history of development of ideas about the embodiments of the Buddha.

At least insofar as the Chinese evidence shows, it seems that the concept of *dharmakāya* actually emerges slightly earlier than that of the *rūpakāya.* When the term *rūpakāya* does emerge, it does so quite preponderantly in contexts where it is specifically articulated with the *dharmakāya.* These facts suggest that the term *rūpakāya* emerges as a specific label for "the body that is not the *dharmakāya*", a body that, until the notion of *dharmakāya* was elaborated, really required no special label at all, because it simply was "the Buddha's body", insofar as he

had one – the last human body he had, in which he became Buddha. In other words, the notion of *rūpakāya* so-named was a kind of formation by reaction against the notion of *dharmakāya.*

We have seen that in Prajñāpāramitā and Lokôttaravāda contexts, the ideas later labelled by the term *dharmakāya* were already forming as early as Lokakṣema, and that the *Lokânuvartanā-sūtra* (LAn) in particular certainly says in so many words that the Buddha is embodied in *dharma*(*s*), though it may not necessarily use the term *dharmakāya* (it is in fact difficult to be sure). On these grounds, it seems most plausible to reconstruct the development of these concepts and terms roughly as follows.

In a first phase, perhaps centring on a context we could broadly call "Prajñāpāramitā-Lokôttaravāda" after the fact that many of the basic ideas seem to be shared between the two contexts as represented by Lokakṣema's *Aṣṭa* and LAn, the idea emerges that the Buddha is most veritably embodied in *dharma*(*s*), and in his gnosis of that/those *dharma*(*s*). In a second phase, the term *dharmakāya* is coined or revived[2225] to label this understanding. In a third phase, which our evidence does not allow us certainly to distinguish chronologically from the second even if it is logically distinct, the term *rūpakāya* is coined or adapted[2226] to label the ordinary fleshly body of the Buddha in its corruptibility and inadequacy. In regard to the latter elaboration of the *rūpakāya,* we must bear in mind that the understanding of the fleshly body as inadequate in a number of different ways is the oldest layer of Buddhist ideology about the

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[2225] Of course, it is also possible that the term was creatively applied to this use after its rediscovery in the old context of DN 27, though we must note that there is no indication in any of the present texts that the DN 27 warrant is important for this early wave of *dharmakāya* texts.

[2226] Recalling that it seems, e.g. from the An Shigao passages we saw above and also from the evidence of the earlier Sarvâstivāda Abhidharma, that the term *rūpakāya* did have a marginal existence as a term labelling the bodies of the *kāma*- and *rūpadhātu* in opposition to the immaterial bodies of the *ārūpyadhātu* prior to its use in application to a body of the Buddha.

body, as we saw at length in Chapter 2 of this dissertation; but that its specific application *to the Buddha* here is something quite new.

In summarising the understanding of *rūpakāya* we see in these early passages, I noted that they betray a focus of interest on the problem of the visual: that is, on obtaining *darśan* of the Buddha. I contrasted this with the focus on the degree of the Buddha's actual worldliness and the tainting of the Buddha by his entanglement in the world that seems to be the centre of the Sarvâstivāda Abhidharma discourse about the "body of birth". Of course, both of these kinds of Buddha-bodies emerge in articulated opposition to the *dharmakāya,* so that it is perhaps understandable if previous scholarship has failed adequately to distinguish between them. But they are nonetheless distinct, and, allowing for the uncertainties about relative chronology explored above, we can at least say that once both the *rūpakāya* and the *Vibh* "body of birth" are on the scene, Buddhism plays host to not one but two "two-body" models of the Buddha's embodiments. This being the case, it is certainly important that we inquire into the relations between these two alternative models.

This question can be approached, I believe, though a consideration of the relation of all of these developments to the "Lokôttaravāda" docetism of the *Lokânuvartanā-sūtra* (LAn)*,* which we explored in the second section of the present chapter. Recall that the central theme of the LAn as a whole was the distinction between reality and appearances in the actual truth of the Buddha's person and teachings. It was explicitly stated in a number of passages in that text that the Buddha is *not* defiled by any of the apparent indignities his human birth and life entangled him in, beginning with the defilement of conception, residence in the womb, and physical birth. All this, the text repeatedly emphasised, was a mere "show" (現, 示, *ston mdzad*

pa, snang ba etc.), while the Buddha in truth persists unalterable in his real ineffable state as *dharma*[*tā*].

It is possible, I hold, to broadly interpret the alternative two-body models proposed by *rūpakāya* doctrine and "body of birth" doctrine respectively as two different reactions to or developments of the problems implicit in the LAn scenario.

On the one hand, what we might loosely call "*rūpakāya* doctrine" focuses on the problem of obtaining true *darśan* of the Buddha in light of these revelations about his true (quasi-)ontological and metaphysical status and identity. The Buddha is truly to be "seen" in the *dharma,* i.e. in his *dharmakāya.*[2227] For this reason, it is handy to have a word to label the usual visual form that fools might mistake from him, in order the better to warn people off fixation upon it. Hence the term *rūpakāya,* "body of ordinary, visible, material form". This understanding, we might say, accepts the basically docetistic LAn stance, and its terms are articulated in order to express that understanding more succinctly and forcefully.

By contrast, what we might on the other hand call "body of birth" doctrine stoutly rejects the docetism of LAn, as the self-accounting of the *Vibhāṣā* about its response to the people it calls "Mahāsāṃghika" shows. This doctrine of embodiment rather insists upon the real and genuine involvement of the Buddha in the world. He really did have a body in which he was born – his "body of birth" – and he really did undergo all the indignities and defilement that ontological status entails. Thus it is possible, at least according to the account of some authorities, for him to contemplate some kinds of impurity taking even his own body as object. Thus it is that he

[2227] We might wonder how the *dharma* is to be "seen" – hence perhaps the emphasis in some of these passages on the body of marks, which is perhaps understood as a veritable visual manifestation of the *dharmakāya.*

genuinely weakens in later life, and does not just make a show of it as LAn would have it.[2228]

Thus, far from being the source of "the" two-body model and identical to the "*dharmakāya-rūpakāya*" model in its content, the Sarvâstivāda Abhidharma "*dharmakāya*-body of birth" model is best understood (a) as a reaction *against* the actual earliest two-body model; and (b) therefore, on logical grounds as well as on the best evidence we actually have about relative dates, most likely a later phase of development than the earliest intimations of the "two-body" model that we have.

With these arguments in hand, it is now possible for me to explain my larger claim that the early *dharmakāya-rūpakāya* material we see in the third-century Chinese record therefore constitutes not only the earliest solidly datable evidence we have to my knowledge for these two terms respectively, but also the earliest datable evidence we have for any part of what was to become the standard *kāya* discourse *per se.*[2229]

This means that the actual discourse of *buddhakāya,* so-named, is far, far newer in Buddhist history than has previously been assumed. It also means that *kāya* discourse itself emerges only relatively shortly before the age in which the "classic" *trikāya* doctrine emerges. Indeed, in the broader view, the emergence of *kāya* discourse in the two-body model and the emergence of the *trikāya* model are both components of a single broader period of the irruption and ferment of speculation about the Buddha's embodiments and their relations, articulated under the rubric of various kinds of *kāya*.

[2228] Cf. LAn Tib. v. 35, 36, Ch. T807.752a109-15, Tib. v. 99, Ch. 753b28-29, etc.

[2229] The notion of the Buddha as embodied in his gnosis, the *aśaikṣaskandhas* etc. is older, as I have argued at length in this chapter as a whole.

4.5.4 Implications of these findings for the place of Sarvâstivāda Abhidharma ideas in the history of Buddha-body doctrine

In closing this brief, preliminary survey of evidence for the actual emergence of the *dharmakāya* so-named and its opposition to the *rūpakāya,* it is worth returning our attention for a moment to the problem of the place of Sarvâstivāda Abhidharma ideas in the larger context of the history of ideas about the Buddha's embodiments.

We have seen in this section of this dissertation that in a considerable number of passages a hundred years before the first Chinese evidence of "two-bodies" in Sarvâstivāda (and even then, as we have seen, *Vibh* at least does not speak of *rūpakāya*), we find a "two-body" model of *rūpakāya* and *dharmakāya* already quite widespread in Mahāyāna sources. We also saw, in our study of Sarvâstivāda materials, that not only the terms, but the very interest in the problems of the Buddha's most veritable embodiment *per se* was almost entirely absent in the Sarvâstivāda Abhidharma corpus prior to the *Vibhāṣā.* Now, we should not, of course, fall into the methodological trap of assuming the Chinese record an infallible mirror of all that was going on in Indian Buddhism at a given time. Nonetheless, it would be a strange interpretation of all this evidence as a whole to assume, despite its relative priority in that record, that the Mahāyāna two-body model is in fact, as the traditional account has told us, derived from a putative Sarvâstivāda model. This would be an especially stretched interpretation of the evidence when we consider, as we have clearly seen, that the Mahāyāna texts do not use the actual *Vibhāṣā* terminology of "body of birth" to speak of the Buddha's final earthly body, and that when they do speak of *rūpakāya,* they do so to articulate a preoccupation with problematics quite different from those that engage discussion under the head of "body of birth" in Sarvâstivāda discourse.

Suspending assumptions about the supposed impermeability of Mainstream sources to Mahāyāna influence, and simply looking at large patterns of chronology in the history of these ideas, I would suggest that a much more plausible scenario would be the following. Where we find the *dharmakāya* so-named suddenly bursting upon the scene in the Mahāyāna corpus, and where we also find it so-named suddenly bursting into the Sarvâstivāda texts as well, it is most likely that these developments belong to the same phase of doctrinal history.

We have little to go on, of course, in order to try and decide the relative priority, if any, of these respective two-body models, with their differences as well as their common features. We might observe, however, that in the Mahāyāna, we see, in addition to the advent of this terminological opposition *per se,* an established interest in the problem of the Buddha's most veritable embodiment, which we have documented as early as we have any evidence of the Mahāyāna at all, in the texts of the Lokakṣema corpus. In addition, we have also traced through the Prajñāpāramitā corpus in particular a number of ideas that are identifiable as prototypes of the notion of *dharmakāya* in content but not yet in name – most notably, the idea of embodiment in gnosis and embodiment in a "metaphysical" object of that gnosis. This situation in our Mahāyāna texts is in stark contrast to the pattern we have observed in Sarvâstivāda, where there is no interest in the problematic of embodiment prior to the advent of the terminology in the *Vibhāṣā,* and where we also do not see any prototypical form of the ideas emerging before the actual letter. To my mind, at least, the most plausible interpretation of this pattern, albeit one that must remain conjecture and which runs quite starkly against received opinion, is that the opposition between *dharmakāya* and *rūpakāya* emerges organically in the Mahāyāna context over a period of time, and that the basic idea of a two-body model is adopted into the Sarvâstivāda context, but there adapted to the ends of various topics of

discussion that had not been the focus of the uses of the *dharmakāya-rūpakāya* distinction in the Mahāyāna context.

This economic explanation for the evidence we have to hand would carry two further implications for Sarvâstivāda Abhidharma ideas of the Buddha's bodies.

First, it would imply that the sudden influx of body-doctrine materials into the Sarvâstivāda context, as evidenced by the multiple *Vibhāṣā* passages we studied above, date to some time between the mid-third century, when we have seen it is evidence in Mahāyāna sources, and the rough *terminus ad quem* of the first *Vibhāṣā* translations themselves around 400.[2230]

Second, it would imply that we see there a shift of emphasis *from* a Mahāyāna *dharmakāya* understood in terms of plain gnosis (*sarvjñatā, prajñāpāramitā*) and its "metaphysical", "ultimate" object (*dharmatā, prajñāpāramitā* in light of the different emphasis it sometimes receives as "infusing all things" etc.) *to* an interpretation more in terms of lists of *dharmas,* in the plural, at least on the surface of things. If the appropriation and reinterpretation of the notion of *dharmakāya* really goes in this direction, of course, then we are dealing with the polar opposite of the development envisaged by Paul Harrison, who imagines a common heritage of *dharmakāya* as embodiment in plural *dharmas* being newly construed at some indeterminate late date to refer to a unitary Mahāyāna absolute. I have argued above that we should still understand the Sarvâstivāda notion of *dharmakāya* as referring to the Buddha's embodiment in *aśaikṣadharmas* or the *āveṇikadharmas* as centred on gnosis. On the interpretation I am proposing here, this element of the doctrine would represent the common conceptual core retained by the Sarvâstivāda theorists when they incorporated the new concept of *dharmakāya*

[2230] Obviously, we can suggest this without thereby pretending that this suggestion bears any large implications for the date of the text of *Vibhāṣā* as a whole.

into their system. The specific spin they give to the doctrine, in terms of various rubrics of plural *dharmas,* would thereby be a new garb in which they clothe this borrowed conception – a guise more in keeping with the more pluralistic ontology of their basic philosophical posits.

Naturally, the question would still remain why the Sarvâstivāda, having incorporated the notion of *dharmakāya* into their system, would have refused to use the term *rūpakāya* for its terminological counterpart, instead opting for the terms "body of birth" or "body born of father and mother". In contrast to the term *rūpakāya,* I was unable to find the term "body of birth" in the corpus of our sample "first four" translators (An Shigao, Lokakṣema, Zhi Qian, Dharmarakṣa) – not even in the corpus of Dharmarakṣa, where the term *rūpakāya* is, relatively speaking, so plentiful. At least so far as the same kind of evidential test used here for the dating and provenance of *rūpakāya* can inform us, therefore, the term seems not to be as early as *rūpakāya*, and may well be a coinage of the *Vibhāṣā* itself (or of MPPŚ, which we saw is another early context in which it is used very frequently, though there alongside frequent use of *rūpakāya* also). This might suggest that the *Vibhāṣā* authors in fact made a conscious decision *not* to use the term *rūpakāya,* which the evidence of the way that term seems to have arisen in close company with *dharmakāya* suggests is likely to have already been circulating in the context in which they wrote their own passages about embodiments. This would naturally raise the question of what their reasons might have been for rejecting it.

One possible reason for the Sarvâstivāda doctors' deliberate preference for, and even perhaps coinage of, the term "body of birth" might be that the term *rūpakāya* already had a limited currency in their own literature and discourse, as we saw above, in reference to the embodiments of ordinary beings in the *kāmadhātu* and *rūpadhātu* as opposed to the immaterially embodied beings of the *ārūpyadhātu,* and they therefore avoided it out of a desire

to avoid ambiguity, and perhaps also out of respect for the Buddha. I have already suggested in the foregoing that another possible reason, however, is that, as is shown by the actual content of the passages in which the term is deployed, the Sarvâstivādins wished to express by the term "body of birth" their opposition to the "Lokôttaravāda" docetistic doctrine that the Buddha was entirely beyond the world and only partook of it by a show; the term "body of birth" would be particularly apt for such a use, insisting as it does upon the fact that the Buddha *really did* undergo the demeaning and defiling process of physical birth.

Such final resolution of the questions broached here as may be available, however, must remain a topic for future research, and in the meanwhile the reconstruction of the history and relations among the terms *dharmakāya, rūpakāya* and "body of birth" proposed in this section of this dissertation must be recognised as frankly speculative.

Chapter 4.6: Summary and conclusions

In this chapter, our main focus has been the earliest conceptions of embodiment available to us in our evidential record in the period after the closing of the Pāli canon. As we saw, the gap that intervenes between the generally accepted *terminus ad quem* for Pāli-canonical materials at 100 C.E. and the inception of the Chinese Buddhist record in the second century C.E. confronts us with something of a "black box" in our chronology. Materials that are available to us in the early Chinese record, which by the nature of the Chinese record are more clearly datable (as translations) than any material in the Indic record, present us with a vast and rich range of ideas at the state of development in which they stood at that time, with few clues to allow us to try and determine which among them might have arisen earlier, and which later, in the nearly three centuries for which our record is almost silent. This presents us with a tough problem in trying to reconstruct the relative chronology of developments of ideas about bodies.

As we saw, one small glimmer of light in the otherwise dark historical landscape enclosed by this "black box" is found in the Kharoṣṭhī inscriptional record. In this chapter, I have argued that the conception of relics revealed by these inscriptions, and particular by the greater detail of the rich if partially opaque Senavarma Inscription in particular, allows us to see that around the turn of the Common Era, at the latest, relics were already considered veritable bodies of the Buddha.

To give this argument context, I broke temporarily with my usual chronological mode of exposition, and anachronistically surveyed a large broad range of materials relating to relics from across the Buddhist world and into the early part of the second millennium. I argued that there are ample grounds in all of this material to show that relics were certainly regularly conceived of as veritable bodies of the Buddha in many quarters of the tradition, and that as such, they entered into conceptual dialectics with other types of body and ideas about them.

I argued, further, that this interpretation of relics as bodies, which has been neglected by the secondary literature, makes better sense of a broader range of what we observe going on historically with relics than the interpretation I take to have been most noticed and influential in recent years – Gregory Schopen's understanding that relics are alive. I further observed in this connection that this claim about relics by Schopen is significantly weakened by Harry Falk's recent persuasive arguments that the key parts of the Bajaur Inscription, of which Schopen has made very heavy use in mounting this argument over the years.

In a postface to the section on relics, further, I returned to this question of how the secondary scholarship in Buddhist Studies has interpreted relics, and noted that the understanding of relics as bodies has been almost entirely overlooked by secondary scholarship, even though it was so widespread and basic within the tradition itself . Secondary scholars have rather favoured heavily etic characterisations that sometimes seem to have more to do with current preoccupations in the modern academy than with the object of study. I argued that many, if not the majority, of the characterisations of relics that are current in the secondary literature are compromised by an excessive squeamishness about the notion of presence.

Using John Strong's interpretation of relics as "expressions of the biography of the Buddha" as an example, I argued that these presence-shy interpretations, when their implicit logic is pushed to its limits, can be shown to be founded upon assumptions that are Buddh*a*logically incoherent, and also, therefore, make for poor Buddh*o*logy (Buddhist Studies). Such interpretations fail to account descriptively for much of the understanding of and attitudes to relics found in the tradition, and also for the relics' power over the Buddhist imagination. I suggested that my interpretation of relics as veritable bodies of the Buddha may redress the

balance somewhat in this regard, since it holds the potential to serve as a category that does justice both to the power of genuine presence and its paradoxical relation with actual ("ultimate") "absence". I further suggested that this potential can be seen particularly clearly when we realise that the conundrums we thus observe at work in the category of "body" as applied to the Buddha apply equally well to what we might otherwise unthinkingly take as the paradigm case, that is, his last earthly body in his existence as the human prince Śākyamuni.

Hopefully having established by these various arguments, both empirical and conceptual, that it is legitimate and analytically powerful to understand relics as bodies of the Buddha, I argued that while this conception cannot be clearly traced back to the Pāli-canonical materials, it is certainly present as early as the Kharoṣṭhī inscriptions, and that relics are therefore the earliest positive, special (i.e. particular) and ideal embodiment of the Buddha that we see in our record.

In making this argument, I drew particularly on the light cast on the problem of the Buddha's embodiments by a more global awareness than has to my knowledge hitherto been achieved in the secondary literature of the meaning and application of the rubric of the five "pure aggregates" of morality (*śīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), wisdom (*prajñā*), liberation (*vimukti*), and insight into the special knowledge of liberation (*vimuktijñānadarśana*). One major contention of this chapter, and I hope one major contribution of the present study to the unravelling of the history of Buddhist bodies, lies in the observation that this rubric represents a kind of heretofore unnoticed thread that binds together a wide range of disparate materials in ideas about ideal embodiment in Buddhism, over a relatively broad sweep of the early history of the tradition.

Thus, I argued that the concrete content of this rubric of five *skandhas* can be traced back to the DN 10 (*Subha-sutta*) application of its first three members as a framework for epitomising the path of practice and realisation found most classically in DN 2 (*Sāmaññaphala-sutta*), but repeated verbatim throughout almost the entirety of the first *vagga* of *Dīghanikāya.* I argued, therefore, that the rubric is a shorthand for representing a certain analysis of the attainments of the perfected person. I further argued, recalling arguments from Chapter 2 of this dissertation, that problematics of embodiment are already at the core of the model of practice and realisation so epitomised, in the sloughing off of the ordinary given body (as per what I have called the "snake slough" model), and the elaboration of a *manomayakāya* as an alternative, more powerful form of embodiment as the vehicle for the realisation of powers and extraordinary superknowledges, and upon that basis, for the attainment of full liberation. This, I argued, along with the fact that the analysis is given in terms of an alternative set of five aggregates (*skandhas*) clearly intended to mirror the fivefold *skandha* analysis of ordinary given embodiment, allows us already to understand that the rubric of the five pure aggregates is in its very inception an implicit model of ideal embodiment.

I argued from certain facts later in the tradition that it is clear that the five pure aggregates represent a model of embodiment. The *Mūlasarvâstivādavinaya* relates a tradition in which it is implied that these qualities or attainments of the person survive them at their physical death, and that there is therefore no need to lament the loss of the *person* when the physical body is lost. We also saw in detail in later parts of this chapter that the five pure aggregates are regarded as one key dimension of the doctrine of ideal embodiments of the Buddha in Lokakṣema's *Aṣṭasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā-sūtra;* and that they are at the heart of one key definition of the *dharmakāya* in the Sarvâstivāda Abhidharma.

In light of this broad pattern of association of the rubric of the five pure aggregates with problematics of embodiment, both earlier and later in the tradition, in quarters which further are quite widely separated from one another, I believe that it is a basic feature of the rubric itself. For this reason, I believe that the claim made in at least three of the Kharoṣṭhī inscriptions that relics are "quickened by" (*paribhāvita*) these five pure aggregates, as first observed by Gregory Schopen, is clear evidence that the broad conception of relics as veritable bodies of the Buddha, which I already showed so widely in the later tradition, can be traced back at least to the period evidenced by these inscriptions.

I further observed, in the rich detail of the Senavarma Inscription, that there are other respects in which we can observe the conception of the relic as a veritable embodiment of the Buddha already at work in this period. I argued that it is possible, and most consistent, to interpret this inscription as claiming that the *dharma,* precisely as the ultimate object of the Buddha's realisation, is in the relic; and that it seems likely that the inscription also plays with the double meaning of *dhātu* (as "relic" and "realm") to claim that *nirvāṇa* itself, in a similar sense, is in or to be identified with the relic.

The advent of the idea of relics as a veritable embodiment of the Buddha is thus not only significant for the study of Buddhist relics. It represents a watershed moment in the history of doctrines of embodiment in Buddhism in the largest sense. Recall that in Chapter 3 of this dissertation, we that even in later Pāli-canonical materials, it is not possible to see any clear evidence of any conception of a positive and special embodiment of buddhahood. We did observe the idea that spiritual attainment entailed a change in the mode of embodiment for all realised beings (and not just Buddhas) in the conception of the *manomayakāya,* and we also saw certain hints of the emergent idea that a Buddha might have an adequate positive mode of

embodiment in the body of marks of the *mahapuruṣa.* However, the central lesson of our survey of Pāli-canonical ideas about embodiment was that the only real ideal was radical *dis*-embodiment, and that there was correspondingly *no* conception that full buddhahood could be or should be adequately embodied at all. We therefore closed Chapter 3, and the Pāli-canonical period, with the question of the origin of ideas of special Buddha bodies still wide open.

If relics are already regarded as a veritable embodiment of the Buddha at the turn of the Common Era, therefore, it implies a quite thoroughgoing change in perspective on the history of Buddha-body doctrine as a whole. We see that relics are in fact *the earliest* form of adequate or ideal Buddha body (as opposed to the merely given human body Śākyamuni shares with the rest of us, or the body of marks as a special body but one most closely appropriate to his status as *bodhisattva*). This significant fact has been entirely overlooked in Buddhist Studies to date. It seems to me that it can only have been overlooked due to a combination of factors: first, the failure to realise that relics were regarded as bodies, which has led to relics and bodies being treated as if they belong to entirely different categories of Buddhist phenomena; second, the unquestioning acceptance of the unsubstantiable notion that some conception of special Buddha bodies goes back to the Pāli canon; and third, the fact that much of the relevant epigraphic evidence, and especially the Senavarma Inscription, has only very recently become available to the broader scholastic community for study.

As I argued above, however, once we do observe that relics are thus the earliest special body ascribed to the Buddha, several further consequences follow for the history of body doctrine as a whole. First, despite the fact that the problem of *buddhakāya,* especially as exemplified in *trikāya* doctrine, is known primarily as an exemplar of the most abstruse heights to which schoolman-like doctrinal speculation can reach, it seems that in fact, the very notion of a

special, adequate, positive embodiment of buddhahood has its roots in cultic practice. Indeed, in light of these roots, I believe that it is possible for us to speculate that the conception of a relic as a veritable body probably existed in some inchoate or at least unwritten form for quite some time before it eventually found its way into our record in inscriptions, and thus to suspect that the earlier evidence we also surveyed in this chapter of cultic activity around relics might also have been informed by such a conception. Be that as it may, it certainly seems that in the very notion of a "body of the Buddha" *per se,* we may be in the presence of a *de facto* product of cultic practice, to which more doctrinally inclined minds only formulated justifications and gave names *post hoc,* perhaps by way of putting the best face on a *fait accompli.*

Subsequent parts of this chapter showed that the history of doctrines about embodiments in the subsequent period is also very different from the way it has previously been envisaged.

First, when conception of relics as veritable bodies of the Buddha to its rightful place in the history of ideas about embodiment in Buddhism, it enables us to make sense of the relation between the polemic against the cult of relics in the early Prajñāpāramitā literature, and the advocacy in the same contexts of new, alternative visions of the Buddha's embodiment. We quickly bump up here against the limits of what is shown us by the "black box" of our textual record. Nonetheless, it is clear that in these Prajñāpāramitā contexts the merit of offerings to relics is deliberately undermined. At the very same time, a set of new and seemingly strange claims are advanced to the effect that *in fact,* the Buddha's most veritable body is not any bit of stuff at all, relics included, but rather his special gnosis.

It is not a wild inference, therefore, I believe, to think that these alternative models of embodiment are being proffered as a challenge to the idea of relics as veritable bodies, and this

in itself is evidence that the conception of relics as bodies was probably already in existence at the time when the passages concerned were composed, and, most likely, that new alternate visions of the Buddha's most veritable embodiment were in fact partly motivated by the challenge of the relic cult. It is possible, therefore, though it will in all likelihood for ever remain a matter of speculation, that the very notion of a *buddhakāya*, and the various marvellous or esoteric candidates that were advanced under that head in the course of Buddhist history, might in part represent in its very origin a reaction-formation, as it were, against the notion of a *buddhaśarīra*. The traces of anti-relic polemic in our texts may thus be the lingering echo of the first cataclysmic encounter that produced that reaction, when the positive idea of an adequate, effable *buddhakāya* was wrest from the bosom of the stubborn ineffabilist void[2231] that previously reigned on the subject (as so-called "cosmic background radiation" is a lingering electromagnetic echo of the Big Bang).

Whatever its precise origins, the idea of embodiment in gnosis seems to spring almost fully-formed into our post-Pāli-canonical record. We saw in this chapter that it is a dominant though hitherto neglected theme in the *Aṣṭasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā* of Lokakṣema, translated at the end of the second century C.E. and at the very inception of the Chinese record, and thus representing part of the earliest edge of our datable textual record after the Pāli canon itself. I argued that in that text, it is clear that the Buddha is understood to be most veritable embodied in the "perfection of wisdom" (*prajñāpāramitā*) itself, in the triple sense of the Buddha's perfect knowledge of the truth, the "metaphysical" ultimate true state of affairs in things as the object of that gnostic insight, and the texts that embody the teachings that lead us to the same gnosis. We saw that this basic orientation is matched by a number of related notions of embodiment, among which the most important were that *sarvajñatā* or "omniscience" is also a form in which

[2231] See once more the definitions of these terms above at n. 39-42.

the Buddha is veritably embodied, and also the idea that he is embodied, once more, in the same five pure aggregates that we have seen comprise a hidden thread linking notions of embodiment as far afield as the *Dīghanikāya,* reliquary inscriptions, and the *Mūlasarvâstivāda-vinaya*.

Indeed, we also saw, in the course of a careful analysis of the literature of the Sarvâstivāda Abhidharma for its conceptions of embodiment, that these five pure aggregates are at the heart of one of two definitions of the *dharmakāya* in that literature. In the course of that analysis, I argued, first, that the **Mahāvibhāṣā* definition of the *dharmakāya* in terms of the five pure aggregates is at base the same, despite surface difference, as the definition in terms of a tenfold rubric of *aśaikṣadharmas* ("qualities of those beyond further training") found in the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*. I further argued, more pertinently to my central point here, that both this definition and the other main Sarvâstivāda definition of the *dharmakāya* in terms of the eighteen *āveṇikadharmas* can be understood as centred upon the notion of the Buddha's embodiment in his gnosis. This means, of course, that the idea of the Buddha's embodiment in his gnosis is an important thread binding together the conceptions of the Buddha's most veritable embodiment in both Sarvâstivāda Abhidharma and the early Prajñāpāramitā, two contexts which are usually opposed to one another as "Mahāyāna" and "Mainstream/schools" sources.

In a sense, the observation of this common preoccupation with the Buddha's most veritable embodiment in his gnosis across both Sarvâstivāda and Prajñāpāramitā might be taken as an instance of what Paul Harrison has called the abolition of "imaginary distinctions" in Buddhist intellectual history. However, if it does answer this call, it does so in a manner which is diametrically opposed to the direction in which Harrison himself has attempted to push his

analysis of body doctrine. Harrison's primary contention is that the early Mahāyāna had not yet broken with what he understands as a "Mainstream" conception of the *dharmakāya.* My arguments abolish "imaginary distinctions" in precisely the opposite sense to this, by showing that the Sarvâstivāda understanding of the *dharmakāya* in terms of lists of plural *dharmas* has much in common with an emergent Mahāyāna understanding, insofar as it can be analysed as boiling down ultimately to the idea of embodiment in gnosis. This common ground, however, is centred on precisely the kind of conception that Harrison wants to exclude.

In other words, one of my most important aims in this chapter, has been to show that Harrison's claims about the "Mainstream *dharmakāya*" are incorrect even on his own stomping-ground, among the texts of Lokakṣema himself. Particularly in the section of this chapter devoted to the early Prajñāpāramitā, where I focused on Lokakṣema's *Aṣṭa* as our earliest witness to the state of Prajñāpāramitā ideas, I showed, across quite a wide number of passages, that even if it is not quite possible to show clearly that Lokakṣema knew or used the term *dharmakāya,* it is perfectly clear that something very close in all important respects to the "classic Mahāyāna" *dharmakāya* is at work in his texts. The Buddhas are identified with an underlying reality that belies the apparent surface profusion of phenomenal experience; they do not come or go; the gnosis of the Buddhas (i.e. *prajñāpāramitā* itself), in which they are clearly embodied, is sometimes spoken of, in a manner almost reminiscent of the *Dao de jing* account of the relation between the Way and the "ten thousand things", as the wellspring of all *dharmas;* and so on. I do not believe it is tenable, therefore, to deny that even in Lokakṣema, we see the most important lineaments of the *dharmakāya* in everything but name almost fully formed.

I have also tried to trace, in this chapter, what I see as a close, even inextricable connection between this emergent Mahāyāna "metaphysic" (of *śūnyatā,* thusness, the *dharmadhātu* etc.) and the actual origins of the doctrine that I have here called "Buddhist docetism" or *lokôttaravāda.* As I attempted to show in detail above, I do not believe that we have any reason to believe the traditional account that claims that such ideas had their *origins* among the Mahāsāṃghika or their subsect the Lokôttaravāda, though it is certainly sufficient to show us that they probably accepted such ideas (or a subset or variant thereof) at some point in their own history. Rather, we first see these ideas emerge, quite fully formed, in the remarkable *Lokânuvartanā-sūtra* (LAn, which once more we are fortunate to have in the translation by Lokakṣema that dates it to the very earliest edge of our post-Pāli-canonical record. But we have nothing to suggest that LAn is a Mahāsāṃghika text other than the circular attribution of it so from the doctrines it contains, and I argued, rather, that the internal evidence of LAn itself suggests that its *lokôttaravāda* Buddhalogy emerges in close tandem with, and indeed, is perhaps even motivated by, a Mahāyāna "metaphysic" of much the same stripe that I see in the other early texts just mentioned.

Indeed, the text not only develops important and well-known themes associated with this emergent Mahāyāna "metaphysic", such as the emptiness of all *dharmas,* but it also clearly associates them with an identification of the Buddha with the *dharmadhātu, dharmatā* etc. that answers precisely to the emergent idea of the (unequivocally Mahāyāna) *dharmakāya* in all but name I have just described in other Lokakṣema texts. Further, as I showed, the text even draws upon this understanding of the true nature of reality, and the identity of the Buddha with it, to *explain* its docetistic doctrines of the worldly show he puts on in various ways, and it seems clearly that the docetistic Buddhalogy of the text is merely a consistent and prominent part of

what I called a larger "metaphysical docetism" (which we can also recognise as a species of gnosticism) which holds that *all* phenomenal appearance is merely a show.

In my opinion, therefore, we cannot avoid the conclusion that the best evidence of our record shows us that docetistic Buddhalogy is not a product of some vaguely imagined or intuited popular pietism, the apotheosis of the Buddha through the era of *jātaka* imaginings. It is rather a coherent part of the emergence of the prototypical Mahāyāna understanding of the difference between truth and appearance (or illusion) and directly related claims about the form in which it is possible for a Buddha to be truly and veritably embodied.

On this basis, I believe it is possible to suggest an explanation for the emergence of docetistic Buddhalogy. I have argued that the first conception of an adequate embodiment of the Buddha was found in relics; that the very notion of *buddhakāya* per se was a reaction-formation against the already established implicit cultic understanding of *buddhaśarīra;* and that the core of this conception was, broadly speaking, that the Buddha was most veritably embodied in his special gnosis of truth and the reality revealed as object to that gnosis. The next logical question would certainly be: "What, then, was the apparent embodiment in which the Buddha appeared to us in history? If he is most veritably embodied in gnosis, or in *dharma* (*dharmadhātu, dharmatā,* etc.), what was the status of that fleshly body?" Some species of docetism is a natural option when confronted with such questions.[2232]

This speculative explanation has the advantage of providing us with a precise motive and set of circumstances for the emergence of docetistic Buddhalogy. By contrast, the prior consensus that docetism was a pre-Mahāyāna Mahāsāṃghika product had projected the origins of the

[2232] I believe this suggestion would be supported by careful cross-cultural comparison.

doctrine into the murky obscurity of the "black box" period. It had thus hidden the very *question* of such a motive behind the veil our poor historical knowledge draws over the period that matters most.

If this is a more adequate explanation for the emergence of docetistic Buddhalogy, moreover, then I believe it also leads to the further implication that docetistic Buddhalogy, which was of course to play out in the further history of Buddha bodies in the eventual doctrine of the *nairmāṇikakāya,* is part of a larger pattern whereby a far greater portion of *buddhakāya* ideas than has been hitherto recognised are more or less pure Mahāyāna products, at least so far as we can tell from our record. This is also one of the more important contentions of the present chapter, since it has the potential to bear quite far-reaching ramifications for the reasons we ultimately end up assigned to the emergence of the very conception of an adequate or ideal body of the Buddha. The understanding that the very idea of Buddha bodies is more squarely a Mahāyāna notion than has hitherto been recognised emerges from the collusion of several different sets of findings in the present study. We saw in Chapter 3 that evidence for such notions is insufficient in the Pāli canon; in this chapter, we saw further that there is insufficient evidence to hold that the early Mahāsāṃghika and the Sarvâstivāda Abhidharma developed such ideas before the Mahāyāna.

In the case of the Mahāsāṃghika, we saw that our very poor historical record is all relatively late; that the most docetistic portions of the *Mahāvastu* are probably borrowed from the *Lokânuvartanā-sūtra* in any case; that many sources are possible biased by polemical or at least external perspectives; and that when we examine them in detail, there are numerous discrepancies between the characterisations of the Mahāsāṃghika in the doxographers and the other evidence we have. The combination of these factors mean, first, that we have almost no

idea what Mahāsāṃghika might have thought, if anything, on matters related to *lokôttaravāda* Buddhalogy in particular in the period that concerns us; and insofar as we can tell anything, it does not indicate that it could have exerted a formative influence on ideas like those in LAn, even if it was early enough to have done so.

In the case of the Sarvâstivāda Abhidharma, we saw, first, that careful scrutiny of their canon down to the immediately post-canonical **Mahāvibhāṣā* shows that there was almost no interest in the problem of the Buddha's embodiment among this school until the *Jñānaprasthāna* (traditionally held to be the centre of the sevenfold canon, and the root text upon which *Vibh* comments), and in many cases, until *Vibh* itself. Consideration of the difficult evidence for the dates of these texts, and the possibly stratified nature of *Vibh* in particular, showed that we have no grounds for concluding on this basis that these ideas were current anywhere near early enough to have been influential on the formation of Mahāyāna ideas.

We also saw, however, that the model of the Buddha's embodiments attributed to the Sarvâstivādins in all the secondary literature to date is plain wrong in two important respects, which between them seem to mean that the field has been working with flawed information.

First, and perhaps less significantly, previous scholars have sometimes recognised one definition of the *dharmakāya* current among the Sarvâstivādins, and sometimes another, but no single scholar has recognised in the same place that in fact, *two* important definitions were current, one in terms of the eighteen *āveṇikadharmas* and one in terms of the *aśaikṣadharmas*-cum-pure aggregates. I have further argued, as summarised immediately above, that both of these definitions have in common a central emphasis on the Buddha's embodiment in gnosis that belies the surface appearance of definition in terms of plural *dharmas,* and which makes

this conception quite fundamentally compatible with Mahāyāna conceptions of the Buddha's most veritable embodiment in at least one important respect.

Second, however, it has been almost universally claimed in the secondary literature to date that the Sarvâstivādins propounded a two-body model of the Buddha's embodiments in which the *dharmakāya* was opposed to the *rūpakāya,* and as we saw, this is simply untrue down to the **Mahāvibhāṣā,* though it may in a sense be true of the *Abhidharmakośa.* We saw that the texts almost uniformly conceive of the Buddha's ordinary earthly body under the rubric of the "body of birth" or "body born of father or mother", a concept which I traced to the DN 2 (*Sāmaññaphala-sutta*) description of the reasons for which the ordinary given physical body is inadequate, as is realised prior to its rejection in the "snake slough" model leading to the elaboration of the *manomayakāya.* I argued that the connotations of conceiving of the Buddha's earthly embodiment under such a rubric are fundamentally different to those of the notion of *rūpakāya*, and seem to centre on the claim that even the Buddha is, at least in part, genuinely vulnerable to certain kinds of weakness and impurity.

In the **Mahāvibhāṣā,* the Mahāsāṃghikas are most visibly portrayed as adversaries in arguments precisely over the purity of the Buddha's body. This may indicate that the Sarvâstivādin conceptions of studied here may have been elaborated as a direct response to the Mahāsāṃghika position that the Buddha is utterly pure (not to be confused with the more global and developed docetism usually ascribed to the Mahāsāṃghika). It is further possible that the silence of the Sarvâstivādins on the whole problem of the Buddha's status in his last earthly body prior to *Vibh* may indicate that they only elaborated this notion under pressure of ideas they disagreed with, as a reaction. Be that as it may, it certainly seems clear, first, that the Sarvâstivāda only came relatively late to the problem of the Buddha's embodiments as a

whole; and second, that the standard account of the history of the Buddha's embodiments to date may have done them a fundamental disservice in not only attributing to them a conception of the Buddha's earthly body they did not in fact hold (the *rūpakāya*), but in making them the very originators of that idea! – and, in the process, in entirely missing the point of the neglected idea to which they really did subscribe.

Thus, the Sarvâstivāda did not originate the *dharmakāya-rūpakāya* "two body" model. On the other hand, it seems unlikely that the *dharmakāya* dates back to the Pāli canon. It is therefore natural to ask where the two-body model did in fact come from, and we were also forced to ask where the notion of *dharmakāya* came from, if it was not so old as previously thought.

A preliminary examination of these related questions, primarily on the evidence of the Chinese canon (Chapter 4.5) showed that it seems most likely that the *dharmakāya* emerged so-named by the time of the texts translated by Zhi Qian in the early third century at the latest, as evidence by passages from his *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa*. There, it seemed that we were clearly dealing already with a conception of the *dharmakāya* that had certain affinities to the early Mahāyāna conceptions we had observed without the label as such in earlier materials, including the docetistic opposition between an apparently fallible fleshly body and veritable ideal embodiment. In Zhi Qian's *Vim*, we also already see a definition of the *dharmakāya* in terms of apparently plural lists (like the *āveṇikadharmas*) typical of the Sarvâstivāda.

We saw further that the *dharmakāya* was very frequent in a range of texts by the time of the translations of Dharmarakṣa, in the second half of the same century. In connection with this later set of sources, we also saw the emergence of the *rūpakāya* in a range of senses and in a range of texts, but notably, always in Mahāyāna sources, with a possible centre of gravity in

proto-*Avataṃsaka* materials. It thus seems that the two-body opposition between *dharmakāya* and *rūpakāya* was a product of Mahāyāna contexts in the second or third centuries, allowing time for the transmission of the translation texts through which we here examined the question.

Consideration of the evidence for Mahāsāṃghika and Sarvâstivādin ideas of embodiments thus showed some of the major reasons that I hold the "standard narrative" (see Ch. 1.1) to be flawed. A feature of this standard history has been that previous authors have all imagined a phase of "Schools" ideas, i.e. a phase of ideas developing in Mainstream schools contexts which intervenes between the ideas of the Pāli canon and the ideas of the Mahāyāna. This phase has always been specifically characterised as having two main arms: the emergence of docetistic Buddhalogy among the Mahāsāṃghika, and the emergence of the twofold *dharmakāya-rūpakāya* model among the Sarvâstivādins. All of this is supposed to have happened early enough to have been adopted by, or to have influenced, the early Mahāyāna. I hope that this chapter has made clear the reasons that this version of events is almost entirely imaginary, or at best, that it cannot be corroborated by hard evidence.

These findings imply that we must revise some basic working assumptions that have hitherto been applied, in my opinion almost unthinkingly, in the study of Buddhist doctrinal history.

First, it implies that "schools" (i.e. "Nikāya Buddhism") must have been much more open than we have previously assumed to influence *from* the burgeoning Mahāyāna. For it is certainly the case that the *dharmakāya* and *rūpakāya* find their way into "schools" contexts once they have been elaborated; and we have further seen that later evidence shows clearly that a certain subset of *lokôttaravāda* ideas, in the specific sense we have used here relating to docetistic

Buddhalogy, were indeed propounded by the Mahāsāṃghika at some point in their history. This in turn implies that we will no longer be able to assume that in all cases where we find ideas shared across Mainstream and Mahāyāna contexts, they must *a priori* therefore be Mainstream ideas that have been accepted by or have influenced the Mahāyāna.

Second, it may also have implications for our general picture of the impact of Mahāyāna ideas on the Theravāda.[2233] It is clear that the *dhammakāya-rūpakāya* model became standard fare for the Theravāda at some point in its history.[2234] It has not been possible for me, in the scope of this study, to examine in detail the evidence for the earliest attestations of this concept in the Theravāda textual tradition. Closer examination of this question remains an important task for future research, which may force us to revise the picture I have been drawing here. However, I am currently aware of no instances of this dichotomy in the (proto-)Theravāda literature, that is, the post-canonical Theravāda texts, that would predate the earliest evidence for this dichotomy that we saw in the Chinese canon. If it is indeed impossible, as I suspect, to trace this dichotomy any earlier than the texts I have argued suggest a Mahāyāna origin for this concept, then it seems to me that the most consistent interpretation of the evidence will be that the post-canonical Pāli tradition accepted this important set of ideas *from* early Mahāyāna. Once more, such an example would force us to further undo basic assumptions about the supposed imperviousness of "Theravāda" to any serious Mahāyāna influence (such assumptions have, doubtless, been beginning to crumble here and there in recent years in any case).

Finally, we can also recall here that we had occasion, in the course of this chapter, to observe the first inklings of the related ideas that the Buddhas are in fact immortal, and that their most

[2233] See also the suggestions for further research in this direction in §6.2.4.

[2234] See Reynolds, "Several Bodies".

veritable embodiment is in some sense like adamant (we observed these ideas, in particular, in the *Lokânuvartanā-sūtra*). These ideas were to grow in importance through the next couple of centuries, and to end up being incorporated into fully-fledged doctrines of the *dharmakāya* that were to find their place in texts of the seminal fourth century. It is thus to these doctrines that we now turn, by way of a bridge between the ideas studied in this chapter and the emergence of *trikāya* theory and *āśrayaparāvṛtti* in the period of classic Yogācāra.

CHAPTER FIVE: IDEAS ABOUT EMBODIMENTS AROUND THE FOURTH CENTURY C.E.: *TRIKĀYA* AND ITS CONTEXTS

Introduction

The various findings of Chapter 4 set the scene for an extraordinary period of further ferment in ideas about the Buddha's embodiments through the fourth century, which will be our focus in this chapter.

Central among these ideas, of course, is the *trikāya* model of the Buddha's threefold embodiment in a *svābhāvikakāya, sāṃbhogikakāya* and *nairmāṇikakāya,* which I showed in the Introduction to this dissertation as a whole (Chapter 1) has unduly dominated studies to date of ideas about embodiment in Buddhism. One major task of this chapter (Chapter 5.3) will be to re-examine the earliest contexts in which *trikāya* doctrine is elaborated, in order to see the ways in which the emergence of that doctrine looks different when viewed against the background of other findings of this dissertation. I will argue that *trikāya* is indeed a significant development in the history of embodiment doctrine, but is not as central to that history as the teleological standard narrative would lead us to believe, or not central in the same way. This dethronement of *trikāya* from its apparent position at the absolute hub of Buddha-body doctrine proceeds in the first instance on two primary fronts.

First, I have proceeded throughout this dissertation from the methodological posit that we must stop taking the word *kāya* as our main criterion for selecting objects of study, and proceed rather by studying together in an even-handed manner all major ideas that have to do with embodiment in their actual content. In this chapter, I will argue that as soon as we make this adjustment in perspective for the materials of the fourth century, it becomes apparent that in

addition to *trikāya*, there are at least three other major developments in embodiment doctrine that have not been given due consideration in earlier studies.

First, as I will show in Chapter 5.1, we see in this period the culmination of a long development, reaching in its true roots as far back as the earliest layers of the Pāli canon, which leads to the emergence of the ideas that the Buddha is in fact immortal; that his *parinirvāṇa* was thus a mere docetistic show; and that this actual immortality is reflected in the Buddha's embodiment, which is of adamant – this last being, of course, the notion of the *vajrakāya*. Second, this is also the period in which we see the emergence of the key Yogācāra notion of a "revolutionary transformation of the basis" (*āśrayaparāvṛtti*), and I will argue in Chapter 5.2 that here the notion of "basis" (*āśraya*) refers in the first instance to the body, and therefore, that the transformation(s) labelled by this concept are therefore, in their various guises, to be interpreted by reference to the problematic of embodiment. Each of these two notions will be the focus of a dedicated section of this chapter.

In addition to these two notions, I will argue that this period also sees a third major development in embodiment doctrine, aside from *trikāya* theory, in the heightened attention received by the corporeal reinterpretation of the opposition between "the *nirvāṇa* realm with a remainder of support" and "~ without a remainder ~" (*sôpadhiśeṣa-* and *nirupadhiśeṣanirvāṇadhātu*). This development, however, is the endpoint of a long and rather complex history of its own. Rather than presenting that history in a dedicated section of this chapter, I have already traced it in parts in Chapter 3.4 and §4.4.5; the findings of those sections will be supplemented here, in §5.2.8, by a further examination of a connection between the new corporeal reinterpretation of these concepts and *āśrayaparāvṛtti* in the "Nirvāṇa Chapter" of the *Yogācārabhūmi.*

These ideas of immortal embodiment, of revolutionary transformation of the basis, and of *sôpadhiśeṣa-* and *nirupadhiśeṣanirvāṇadhātu* lead us to realise that *trikāya* certainly was not the only significant development in this direction that took place in the period, important though it was. Rather, it was only part of a larger pattern of extraordinary ferment in ideas about embodiments that seems to have characterised the fourth century as a whole. The impetus from this direction to dethrone *trikāya* from its erstwhile position of exaggerated prominence is supplemented in this chapter, further, by a push in the same direction from a different set of considerations.

I will argue that there are several reasons to reject the assumption of the teleological narrative that has dominated studies of ideas of Buddha-bodies to date that *trikāya* somehow represented the last word, a stable synthesis, or an unquestioned orthodoxy. Rather, there is evidence that right from its very inception, *trikāya* doctrine already bound up in its heart a core tension that characterises the problematic of embodiment for Buddhism as a whole. Further, I will argue in Ch. 5.4 that there is empirical evidence of numerous further splits in *trikāya* doctrine through the later history of Buddhist doctrine. These splits reveals that the core tension, appearing in several guises, was a seam at which *trikāya* repeatedly came apart. In this respect, also, therefore, it is fallacious to imagine that *trikāya* somehow represents the endpoint in significant development of ideas about embodiments in Buddhist doctrinal history.

In this chapter, as elsewhere in this dissertation, I will treat the ideas under study in approximate chronological order. I therefore turn now to the examination of the idea of the Buddha's actual and embodied immortality.

Chapter 5.1: Immortal Buddhas and their indestructible embodiments (*vajrakāya*)

"Nevermore shall I return;
Escape these caves of ice –
For I have dined on honeydew,
And drunk the milk of Paradise."
--- Rush[2235]

5.1.1 Introduction

In section 2.2 of this dissertation, I showed that there is an extensively distributed notion of a state of *amata* or "undying" in the Pāli canon, and I related this material to a number of other senses in which we observe the assertion of the conquest of death or dominion over death in early Buddhism, including the conquest of Māra, the early Buddhist tendency to build on funerary sites, the incorporation of funerary symbolism in narratives of the Buddha's awakening, narratives featuring powers of dominion wielded over spirits of the dead by accomplished Buddhist personages, and possibly the use of quenched fire as a symbol for the liberated state. As I said there, one of my purposes in surveying this material was to prepare the ground for the argument that later doctrines of embodied immortality, though they were novel in the predication of immortality as a *corporeal* quality, were not thereby entirely unprecedented in Buddhism, since there was such an extensive and varied precedent for the general assertion of power over death or freedom from it. In this section, I take up that argument once more, and turn to the examination of those later doctrines of immortal embodiments, and a number of other associated concepts.

This strand in Buddhist discourse has been almost entirely disregarded or sidelined in secondary scholarship on Buddhist bodies to date, and so this portion of my study breaks some new ground, also and brings together things that, to my knowledge, have not been treated in

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[2235] Rush (Geddy Lee, Alex Lifeson, Neil Peart), "Xanadu", from *A Farewell to Kings* (Mercury/Polygram, 1977); after Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "Kubla Khan" (1816).

one place before. For this reason, I will have to beg my reader's patience with the quantity of raw spadework required to assemble enough facts upon which to build my substantive argument.

Given the broad sprawl of material my aims require me to cover in a short space, I will necessarily be pursuing two related tactics of abbreviation in my consideration of these materials. First, I will aim to be representative, not exhaustive, and will therefore only cite enough evidence for each theme to show that it indeed exists, and that it is widespread if it is widespread. Second, with each significant idea I will devote my energy to determining approximately *when* it first appears in our textual record. Given the selective nature of my coverage, I am perfectly cognisant that in no case can I claim to have found *the* earliest instance of a certain concept, but for my purposes that will not be necessary, and neither would it be realistic to expect such definitive results from such a broad pioneering study. The research presented below does show, however, that each of the concepts in question must be *at least* as early as the earliest instance of it I have been able to find. It also shows at least that certain ideas are difficult to find before a certain point in the record, but that thereafter they suddenly seem to be everywhere. Even this much approximate information about the relative chronology of these ideas, I will argue, enables us to discern the outlines of a hitherto untold chapter in the history of Buddhist doctrines about bodies, and to raise a number of further questions.

Before I advance any detailed claims, I should also add a word about the methodological limits of the present study. Even with the powerful digital search tools now at our disposal for the study of the Chinese canon, the sheer quantity of text is such that I was unable to mount an exhaustive search through all texts prior to 400. I did, however, search very thoroughly, and in

particular, searched through a very large selection of texts by Lokakṣema, Zhi Qian and Dharmarakṣa,[2236] for the best wide range of search terms I could contrive. These searches repeatedly showed up the consistent pattern of development in ideas about the Buddha's long life, immortality, and immortal embodiments described below. It remains possible that future research will show up some instances of the ideas studied here earlier than those I have observed, but I suspect it is unlikely that the overall pattern I identify will be overturned by future findings. In particular, it seems that the sudden proliferation of new ideas in the Chinese record around 400 C.E. is still a phenomenon worth observing, despite the admitted limitations of my methods here, and that we should try to account for it and consider it as part of the larger history of ideas about the Buddha's embodiments.

Before we can address the texts and ideas that link immortality to embodiments of the Buddha (and some other beings), then, we must first backtrack significantly in our chronological presentation, and trace a background comprised by certain other ideas that developed in the late Pāli-canonical period and the early Mahāyāna. These ideas take up, in a modified form, the theme of exemption from death that we first explored in the discourse of *amata* and related ideas (p. 177 ff. above). As we will see, the first stage of development in ideas about exemption from death is thus an idea that the Buddha, and other beings rendered spiritually powerful through their master of the *ṛddhipāda,* can control their lifespan at will, and could live for as long as they liked if they so chose. This idea appears already in certain Pāli canonical texts, and may be traced further into Abhidharma discourse.

In early Mahāyāna materials, we then see these ideas undergo two or possibly three further phases of development.

[2236] I also paid attention to Mokṣala's *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā* T221, since I happened to be studying that text for other purposes in this dissertation.

In the first of these phases, we encounter a set of ideas about Buddhas and other remarkable beings (or beings in remarkable situations, i.e. other worlds) whose lifespan *is in fact* extraordinarily long, or eternal. In this phase, however, such lifespans are predicated only of beings remote in time and/or space from us here in the Sahā world. It is possible that within this phase, we should distinguish further between two steps of development, one in which only extraordinarily long lifespan is attributed to Buddhas, and a second in which we see clearer evidence of absolute immortality in the application of docetistic explanations to the apparent *parinirvāṇa*. However, as we will see below, there are some difficulties distinguishing clearly between these two possible phases, both in our evidence and also conceptually. Regardless of whether or not such a difference exists, further, we will see that not just extraordinarily long life but utter immortality was certainly predicated of Buddhas in at least some texts by the period represented by the translations of Dharmarakṣa at the latest.

In the second major phase of development in these ideas, we encounter the doctrines that comprise the central topic of this section, namely doctrines that combine the idea of actualised extreme or infinite longevity with docetistic doctrine about Śākyamuni, as the present Buddha of this world, with other ideas about his embodiments, most prominently the notion of the *dharmakāya* and the notion that his body (whether specified as the *dharmakāya* or not) is an "adamant body" (i.e. a **vajrakāya*).[2237] I will show that there is a striking pattern in the Chinese

[2237] Here I must add a note about my translation, throughout this study, of the word *vajra* and the various compounds and phrases it enters into. According to Monier Williams, *vajra* means both "diamond (thought to be as hard as the thunderbolt or of the same substance with it)" and also, as an adjective, "adamantine, hard, impenetrable". The existence, in parallel with the compound **vajrakāya,* of terms such as "a body like *vajra*" (身如金剛 etc.), suggests strongly that even in the compound, *vajra* must be construed as a noun, and for this reason I have eschewed "adamantine" in favour of a similarly nominal translation: "a body like adamant". In this translation, it will be noted, I have rejected the "diamond" given by Monier Williams for *vajra* as a noun, and favoured by some English translators of Buddhist texts, in favour of "adamant". The OED explains "adamant" as follows: "Name of an alleged rock or mineral, as to which vague, contradictory, and fabulous notions long prevailed. The properties ascribed to it show a

Buddhist record, whereby these paired ideas are almost entirely before 400 C.E., and then suddenly erupt in quite a wide variety of texts.

In the larger context of the present study, the timing of these respective developments seems significant, and I will return to the question of their significance in the conclusion to this section.

5.1.2 Pāli canonical antecedents

Already in the Pāli canon, though usually in layers of it that are commonly thought relatively late (late, that is, for Pāli canonical materials), we find a number of ideas that seem clearly related to the eventual ascription of extraordinary or infinite lifespan to the Buddha.

One set of such ideas is found in cosmological theories that lifespans are much longer elsewhere in the cosmos (other than here in Jambudvīpa). Long lifespan is particularly ascribed to various gods.[2238] Life span is also said to be very long in the Paduma hell and other hells

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confusion of ideas between the diamond (or other hard gems) and the loadstone or magnet, though by writers affecting better information, it was distinguished from one or other, or from both. The confusion with the loadstone ceased with the 17th c., and the word was then often used by scientific writers as a synonym of 'diamond'. In modern use it is only a poetical or rhetorical name for the embodiment of surpassing hardness; that which is impregnable to any application of force." It seems to me that these symbolic associations, and the specialisation especially in modern usage where by "adamant" is used to denote a somewhat fabulous substance and its properties, renders it a more apt translation than "diamond", which has irrelevant and prosaic associations that do not help an English reader intuit the sense in which *vajra* is intended in Buddhist contexts. Finally, since the distinction is key to my argument below, I have regularly adopted the somewhat artificial convention of translating "body *like* adamant" for phrases that include an element that makes the simile explicit (as 身如金剛 etc.), but "adamant body" for the compound (金剛身 etc.), where the element of explicit comparison is absent and the identification between the body and adamant is rendered that much closer by the semantics of compound formation. In the latter case, I might as well have rendered with the hyphenated "adamant-body", which conveys the effect of compounding more accurately, but I was deterred from doing so by the fact that the hyphenated form strikes me as plain ugly. In a few places below, for convenience of expression, I further use the term "body *of* adamant" interchangeably with "adamant body", in distinction to a "body like adamant".

[2238] Long lifespan is ascribed to the gods of the Thirty-Three, DN 23, *Pāyāsi-sutta,* Walshe 355; to various gods, AN 3.7.70 "Sorts of Sabbath", Woodward and Hare I, 193-194; to *devas* of various spheres in realms

(according to an elaborate "simile").[2239] In connection with traditions about the long lifespans of Buddhas, it is worth noting that it is in these texts that we first find the use of elaborate conceits to convey the idea of enormous spans of time, such as the idea that a night and day would equate to a hundred years in our world, or analogies like "If a man were to take one mustard seed away from a whole cartload every hundred years . . ." etc.[2240] These conceits perhaps form a remote antecedent for the ideas we see in texts like the *Sukhāvatīvyūha* below: "If a gazillion people in *samādhi* were to count for an entire *kalpa . . .*"

Perhaps related to these ideas of long lifespan in other spatial reaches of the cosmos are ideas that lifespan can also be much longer for humans at times remote from us in the cosmological cycle. For example, DN 26, the *Cakkavatti-sīhanāda-sutta,* relates tales about former ages in which lifespans were 80,000 years, 40,000 years, 20,000 years etc., and predicts that in future the cycle will be reversed.[2241] This tradition is found most frequently, however, in connection with depictions of the ages of past Buddhas.[2242] These lifespans were measured in years, from 80,000 years for Vipaśyin to 20,000 years for Kāśyapa. We should note that these texts say that the lifespan of *all* people was longer in the time of these former Buddhas, not just the lifespan of Buddhas themselves.[2243] Nonetheless, given the association of these traditions with the

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attained in the next rebirth by masters of various kinds of meditation, AN 3.12.113 "The Sphere of Infinite Space", Woodward and Hare I, 245-246; again at AN 4.13.123 (where the lifespan is measured in *kalpas*), Woodward and Hare II, 130-131; so too at AN 8.5.42, Woodward and Hare IV, 172-173.

[2239] SN 6.10, "Kokālika", Bodhi 246; repeated at AN 10.9.90, Woodward and Hare V, 116.

[2240] My classmates and I at a Catholic primary school had nuns of St Joseph use very similar figures to impress upon us the length of eternity in hell.

[2241] Walshe 395-405.

[2242] I am grateful to Jan Nattier for drawing my attention to this possible connection (personal communication). See also her *Once Upon a Future Time,* 19-20.

[2243] See DN 14, *Mahâpadāna-sutta,* Walshe 199-211, which mentions the lifespan of Vipassī and people in his age in particular several times: 200, 202, 219 (twice), etc. Only some of these past Buddhas, and their

worship of the former Buddhas, over time focus may have concentrated on the extraordinary length of the lifespan of these particular Buddhas in particular, and these ideas may thus have formed one thread that fed into later ideas about the extraordinary longevity of Buddhas in particular.

We also find, already in the Pāli canon, the idea that the Buddha has voluntary control over his earthly lifespan, and could, if he so chose, live an extraordinarily long time. This tradition is noteworthy because it comes closer than the other ideas mentioned above to ascribing longevity especially to the Buddha (though in theory it is available to any master of the *iddhipādas*). The *locus classicus* for the claim that the Buddha has voluntary power over lifespan is the DN 16, the *Mahāparinibbāna-sutta*. Shortly before the Buddha dies, he tells Ānanda that anyone who has mastered the four *iddhipāda* and is secure in their mastery "could undoubtedly live for a *kalpa* or more than a *kalpa*".[2244] This claim is repeated three times, but Ānanda fails to take the hint and actually request the Tathāgata to so remain in the world for the sake of sentient beings. A little later in the text, after a temptation by Māra to give up his life immediately and the decision to remain for a further three months to tidy up loose ends, the Tathāgata informs Ānanda that he will soon die, and only then does Ānanda ask that he remain. The Buddha then upbraids Ānanda for his poor timing, and tells him that he cannot grant such a request now, though had Ānanda had the presence of mind to request him to remain when he first made his broad thrice-repeated hint, he "would have consented". In the course of this exchange, the assertion of this power is repeated a further three times.[2245] At a number of other

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lifespans, are also mentioned in SN 15.20, "Mount Vepulla", and this passage confirms that all beings, and not just the Buddhas, of the past, were very long-lived; Bodhi 659-660. AN 7.7.70 relates a tale about a former teacher called "Wheelwright", in whose age people lived 60,000 years;

[2244] *kappaṃ vā tiṭṭheyya kappāvasesaṃ vā*: Walshe 246, translation modified.

[2245] Walshe 251-252.

loci in the canon where this classic story is repeated, we find also the formula attested.[2246] Further, we find in DN 26, the *Cakkavatti-sīhanāda-sutta,* that not only the Buddha but also any "monk [who] develops the road to power which is concentration of intention accompanied by effort of will" etc. "can, if he wishes, live for a full *kalpa,* or more than a *kalpa*".[2247]

Closely associated with the assertion of this power to achieve extraordinarily long life-span is the representation of the Buddha as having the power to decide at will when he will die; the two powers were later (e.g. in the mature Sarvâstivāda Abhidharma) to be paired as the powers "to prolong or abandon life" (*āyurutsargâdhiṣṭhānavaśitva*).[2248] In the same DN 16, *Mahāparinibbāna-sutta,* the Buddha is sick but decides to "hold this disease in check by energy and apply myself to the force of life".[2249] SN 47.3.1.9, "Sick", tells the same story,[2250] and it is, like the assertion of the capacity to live for a *kalpa* or more, repeated in other texts related to MPNS (DN 16).[2251]

Another related Pāli-canonical doctrine is found e.g. in DN 30, the *Lakkhana-sutta,* where the marks (*mahāpurisalakkhaṇa*) of projecting heels, long fingers and toes, and a divinely straight

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[2246] SN 51.10, "The Shrine", Bodhi 1723-1725; AN 8.7.70, *Bhūmicala-sutta,* Woodward and Hare IV, 206; *Udāna,* Masefield 120.

[2247] Walshe 404-405, translation modified.

[2248] E.g. at Bh to AK 7.34, VP V, 83.

[2249] *atha kho bhagavato etadahosi . . . . yannūnāhaṃ imaṃ ābādhaṃ viriyena paṭippanāmetvā jīvitasaṅkhāraṃ adhiṭṭhāya vihareyya'nti*: Walshe 244; Rhys Davids translates that the Buddha decides "by a strong effort of the will" to "bend this sickness down again, and keep hold on my life till the allotted time should come"; Rhys Davids II, 106.

[2250] Woodward V, 130-131.

[2251] At AN 8.7.70, the Buddha is similarly tempted by Māra to leave life, and similarly makes a decision to wait three months, though the text does not explicitly say he suppressed the illness by force of will; Woodward and Hare IV, 208. See also *Udāna*, Masefield 124.

body are seemingly allegorically interpreted as related to untroubled and long life. In keeping with the formula whereby the text lays out not just the merit in prior existences that led to the acquisition of the marks, but also the benefit that derives therefrom, we are told that "He [the Tathāgata in prior existences as a ruler] is long-lived, long-enduring, attaining a great age, *and during that time, no human foe can possibly take his life . . .* As a Buddha . . . He is long-lived [etc.]; *no foe, whether an ascetic or Brahmin, a deva, māra or Brahmā, or anyone in the world can possibly take his life.*"[2252] The implication here seems to be that the Buddha could only die when he chose to give up his life, since no force other than himself can force him to relinquish his life.

So far as can be determined, the texts containing these ideas are somewhat varied in date. DN 23, for instance, may be relatively early;[2253] we have already seen elsewhere that there are some reasons to regard DN 14, similarly, as reasonably early.[2254] It is possible, then, that ideas about long life for gods and people in remote past ages are relatively old. On the other hand, ideas ascribing power over lifespan to the Buddha in particular seem to be later. The Buddhology of the *Mahāparinibbāna-sutta* is generally considered relatively late,[2255] and the other texts attesting this idea are also generally considered relatively late within the Pāli canon as a whole;[2256] it is difficult to be sure whether these judgements are not based almost entirely on

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[2252] Walshe 445.

[2253] Pande considers it uncertain, but Kingsbury notes that it is consistent with traditions about the erection of *thūpas* over the Buddha's relics, and therefore may match Pande's "early" stratum; Kingsbury 34.

[2254] See p. 1443.

[2255] Though we must recall here that, as we saw above in examining the ideas of Bareau and Schopen over the dating of other ideas in this text relating to relic worship, "relatively late" here may well still mean prior to Aśoka, and thus as old as the third century BCE; see p. 494-497.

[2256] Relevant portions of DN 16, Pande 103, Kingsbury diss (following Pande), 32; DN 26, Pande 111, Kingsbury (following Pande), Kingsbury diss, 35-36, Norman 46. Kingsbury's content-independent aorist method yields no independent data for the texts relevant here.

doctrinal criteria, however. Similarly, DN 30 is considered late on the grounds of its metre, as we have already seen elsewhere.[2257] However late this material might be within the period spanned by the Pāli canon as a whole, however, the inclusion of these materials in the Pāli canon, and that in a number of attestations, shows clearly that within the Pāli canonical period the idea was current, if yet not particularly central or common, that the Buddha had at least the potential ability to live as long as he liked.

Ideas about the Buddha's voluntary control over lifespan are particularly relevant to the story we are following here, and these ideas certainly lived on in the period after the Pāli canon.[2258] La Vallée Poussin lists a further instance of the pericope about voluntary control over lifespan, for instance, in Upagupta's *Avadāna.*[2259] The *Ekottarâgama* has the Buddha and Śāriputra in dialogue expose the fact that the lifespan of the Buddha is beyond the ken of ordinary beings, and that it would in fact be possible for him, if he so chose, to live for a *kalpa.*[2260] Vasumitra's *Treatise* attributes specifically to the Mahāsāṃghikas the doctrine that the Buddha said to Ānanda that one who commands the four *ṛddhipādas* can live for a *kalpa* or more.[2261] This doctrine was formalised in the notion, found in Vaibhāṣika scholasticism, that attributed to the

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[2257] See p. 1445.

[2258] In this connection, it is also surely relevant here, given that we are studying the emergence of an eventual doctrine of immortality against the background of Pāli-canonical doctrines of the undying, that as we observed above, the "Inscription of Senavarma of Oḍi" predicates undying (*amuda*) of *relics.* See above. n. 1171.

[2259] "Appendice" 803.

[2260] VP AKBh, V, 83 n. 3.

[2261] "Appendice" 806-807.

Buddha a "mastery over the abandonment or maintenance of life" (*āyuṣa utsarge 'dhiṣṭhāne ca vaśitvasaṃpad*).[2262]

5.1.3 Actual very long or eternal life

We have already seen, earlier in this dissertation, that the Senavarma Inscription from just after the turn of the Common Era contains hints of several further developments in the direction of claims that the Buddha is actually immortal or eternal. In particular, we saw that this inscription (and at least two other Kharoṣṭhī reliquary inscriptions of similar antiquity) say that relics are "quickened" with (*paribhāvita*) the five "pure aggregates", and I picked upon an MSV passage cited by Gregory Schopen that suggests that (at least somewhat later) it may have been understood that these five "pure aggregates" somehow survived the person after their physical demise (*parinirvāṇa*).[2263] We also saw that the Senavarma Inscription seems to speak of the relic itself as the "undying relic/element" (**amṛtadhātu*), another suggestive if imprecise sense in which the conception of the relic in the inscription seems to have overtones of the Buddha's survival after *parinirvāṇa* or immortality.[2264] These dimensions of the inscription are difficult of interpretation, and certainly not so clear-cut as to comprise irrefutable evidence of the attribution of post-mortem survival or immortality to the Buddha. Nonetheless, they are extremely suggestive in the context of the larger history I am tracing here. In particular, we should note that if I am right in seeing in them shades of the concept of immortality, the ascription of these qualities specifically to the *relic* of the Buddha goes one step beyond any of

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[2262] La Vallée Poussin, "Appendice" 803, referring to AKBh to VII.34, VP V, 83; AK II.10a and Bh, VP I, 120-121.

[2263] See p. 534.

[2264] See n. 1171. However, I note in the discussion of the Senavarma Inscription above that at least one authority on the inscription, Oskar von Hinüber, does not believe that the word *dhātu* refers in this context to the relic; I argue, however, that the inscription is playing on the ambiguity of the word to imply that *nirvāṇa is* (in) the relic.

the material from the Pāli canon that we just examined in the preceding section, in that it ascribes to a Buddha not extreme long life or the potential for extreme long life in a final fleshly body, but actualised escape from death (undying, *amṛta*) in a moment which is by definition subsequent to the moment of *parinirvāṇa,* which was necessary to create the relic in the first place.

In early Mahāyāna materials, the Buddha's (or *a* Buddha's) potential ability to live very long is certainly parlayed into actuality in a broad range of texts.[2265]

Long ago, la Vallée Poussin pointed out that ideas about the unusual lifespan of the Buddha can be divided into two types: on one theory, the Buddha will live for an inordinately long time, but eventually will still enter *parinirvāṇa;* on the other theory, the Buddha remains in the world literally for all eternity.[2266] Further to this same distinction, Jan Nattier has made observations that seem to imply that these two types are not necessarily coeval, but might in fact represent two successive phases in a historical development. This historical development, further, would seem to have been conditioned at least in part by logical considerations inherent in the concepts of the tradition. In particular, Nattier points out cogently that the traditional doctrine that there could only be one Buddha in the world at a time, and the logical contradiction that arose between it and the *bodhisattva* ideal of multiple beings eventually becoming Buddhas, presented a significant obstacle to the development of the idea of the literal immortality of a Buddha. Effectively, if all *bodhisattvas* had to wait in a queue where each could only become a Buddha long after the *parinirvāṇa* of his predecessor and the complete

[2265] The doctrine of the Buddha's extreme longevity, and many of the texts I discuss here, are treated in connection with the embodiments of the Buddha in Guang, 119-124.

[2266] "Appendice" 804-808. I am grateful to Professor Nattier for encouraging me to pursue this distinction more carefully in personal correspondence, after reading an earlier draught of this section.

disappearance of his Dharma, this logic ensured that the longer one Buddha hung around, the less opportunity there was for *bodhisattvas* to realise their goal. At its logical extreme, this dilemma requires that the immortality of the Buddha would entirely scupper the *bodhisattva* ideal.[2267]

For our current purposes here, therefore, it is important that we note certain finer distinctions in the development of the ideas we are examining. In particular, we need first, following la Vallée Poussin and Nattier, to distinguish (1) extreme longevity and (2) strict immortality, and determine whether these two ideas might not arise at different times in Buddhist doctrinal history. Second, I will argue below that we also need to distinguish between extreme longevity or immortality of cosmically remote Buddhas and the same ideas in application to Śākyamuni, i.e. our Buddha in this world system.

As we shall see in the following pages, it seems that the ideas under study do in fact develop in three rough phases, which can be distinguished according to these criteria. Thus, (1) we first see a phase in which it seems that only extreme longevity is attributed to Buddhas (with one possible but potentially significant exception in the Mahāsthāmaprāpta of Lokakṣema's *Sukhāvatīvyūha*), and only to Buddhas cosmically remote from us. Then (2) we see the clear development, around the time of Dharmarakṣa, that Buddhas are in fact exempt from *parinirvāṇa,* i.e. strictly immortal. Finally (3) beginning with Dharmarakṣa's translation of the *Lotus Sūtra,* and then spreading into a range of texts around 400 C.E. in the Chinese record that probably reflect developments of the fourth century at the earliest, the idea of the actual immortality of Śākyamuni, the Buddha of our own world system, appears and becomes common.

[2267] Nattier, "Indian Roots" 183-184.

First, then, we will turn to the materials that seem to witness the earliest of these three phases, in which extreme longevity is attributed to cosmically remote Buddhas.

Nattier discerns in the earliest (proto-)"Pure Land"[2268] literature a phase of development, perhaps determined by the logic outlined above, in which the lifespans of Buddhas may be extremely long, but the stereotyped career of a Buddha still nonetheless includes an eventual *parinirvāṇa;* the Buddha thus eventually "steps aside" and makes room for an heir or eventual heirs. This is the case, for example, in the career of Akṣobhya Buddha as represented in the *Akṣobhyavyūha-sūtra*,[2269] which she has persuasively pointed to as a "missing link" in the development of the Pure Land ideal.[2270] In this possibly very early or prototypical version of "Pure Land" doctrine, then, the presiding Buddha, Akṣobhya, indeed eventually enters into *parinirvāṇa,* an event which is described in considerable detail.[2271] If Nattier is right in identifying the *Akṣobhyavyūha* as representing an earlier phase of Pure Land thought than the *Sukhāvatīvyūha,* therefore, it seems that extremely long life for cosmically remote Buddhas may indeed be an earlier development than absolute immortality.

[2268] On the term "Pure Land" in application to Indic phenomena, see Nattier, "Realm of Akṣobhya" 73-74 and n. 6.

[2269] Extant in translations by Lokakṣema (T313) and Bodhiruci (T310(6)) and a Tibetan translation; for details see Nattier, "Realm of Akṣobhya" 76 n. 11. For other texts that also mention Akṣobhya and his world, see 77-79.

[2270] Nattier, "Indian Roots" 186.

[2271] Nattier, "Realm of Akṣobhya" 85; T313.760b24-c08, 761a12-b15; cf. the translation from the Bodhiruci parallel text in Chang, *Treasury* 330-332. A detail of this account that is of interest here is that on the day of his *parinirvāṇa* Akṣobhya will send out magical manifestations of himself (變化作化人; not referred to as bodies, but clearly presaging the idea of the *nirmāṇakāya*) to preach the Dharma in all the Buddha-lands, T313.760b25-26. It is also worth mentioning that it is clear, as Nattier points out, that in Akṣobhya's land the ultimate death (*parinirvāṇa*) of disciples is also a regular event; Nattier, "Realm of Akṣobhya" 83, T313.757c25-758a06.

This same logic also seems to be partly evidence in the earliest known versions of the *Sukhāvatīvyūha* literature, where, as Nattier makes plain, the idea of the *parinirvāṇa* of more than one Buddha also has a place, in a manner that seems somewhat incongruous from the (anachronistic) standpoint of our usual ideas about Amitābha as conditioned by later versions of the tradition. The *Sukhāvatīvyūha* texts are of course the flagship literature for ideas of actualised embodiments of remote cosmic Buddhas. The two *Sukhāvatīvyūha-sūtra* (the "long" and the "short") exist between them in a number of Chinese versions;[2272] but many of these are too late for our purposes here.[2273] Following recent scholarship by Paul Harrison and further endorsement of his findings by Jan Nattier,[2274] I will regard the translation traditionally attributed to Zhi Qian (阿彌陀三耶三佛薩樓佛檀過度人道經 T362) as the earliest and in fact by Lokakṣema,[2275] while conversely treating the closely related version attributed to Lokakṣema

[2272] Cf. also 佛說觀無量壽佛經 T365, attributed to 畺良耶舍 (Kālayaśas; Gómez 244 n. 4), likewise of the Liu Song;[2272] Gómez believes that "the preponderance of the evidence suggests that this text was composed in China;" Gómez 244 n. 4. Of course, even if it is a Chinese work, it could still provide evidence for the prevalence of any ideas it contains pertaining to the Buddha's longevity, at least in China. Its interest for our current purposes in this respect depends entirely upon the date of its actual composition, however, and unless it dates earlier than the Liu Song period, to which its putative translator belongs, we can disregard it.

[2273] Texts that will be excluded from consideration as too late here are: 稱讚淨土佛攝受經 T367, by Xuanzang, a version of the "short *sūtra*", on which see Gómez 128-129; 無量壽如來會, a version of the "long *sūtra*" translated by the (Tang) Bodhiruci 菩提流志 (active 693-713), included in the *Mahāratnakuṭa* collection T310 (5), 91c05 ff, on which see Gómez 126; 大乘無量壽莊嚴經 T363, attributed to Faxian 法賢 (*Dharmabhadra?, fl. 987), a version of the "long *sūtra*"; and 大阿彌陀經 T364, a compilation of prior translations edited by Wang Rixiu 王日休 (?-1173) of Longshu 龍舒 in 1160-1162.

[2274] See Nattier, "Names of Amitābha", 186 and n. 9; studies in which Harrison has argued this reversal of attribution are cited there; see especially Harrison, Hartmann and Matsuda, 179, 180-181; Harrison, "Women", 556-557, 568 n. 16, 17. See also Nattier, "Indian Roots" 189-190, and n. 29. For the convenience of the reader, the scholarly consensus that was overturned by this work is summarised following Gómez in n. 2275 and 2276 immediately below.

[2275] Prior to Harrison's proposal that the actual authorship of T361 and T362 was the reverse of the attributions in the canon, the standard scholarly opinion on the authorship of this text was summarized by Gómez following Fujita Kōtatsu; Gómez 130.

(無量清淨平等覺經 T361) as actually a revision of the former by Zhi Qian,[2276] and therefore the next earliest version of the text.[2277] These texts, it seems, can be regarded as most likely witnessing doctrinal development in the mid-second and mid-third centuries respectively. (We will have reason to consider below a key further developments in the early fifth-century translations.[2278])

Nattier has pointed out that in these two earliest versions of the Larger *Sukhāvatīvyūha,* it is clear that some Buddhas – at least Amitābha and his successor, the *bodhisattva* Avalokiteśvara – still follow the pattern established by the career of Śākyamuni and ultimately enter into *parinirvāṇa.*[2279] The explicit statement that Amitābha and Avalokiteśvara, at least, will

[2276] Gómez similarly summarised the state of scholarship on the authorship of this text at the time he wrote by saying that "the attribution of this translation to Lokakshema has been called into question;" and further that this text overlaps with that of Zhi Qian (i.e. the text ascribed to Zhi Qian in the canon, T362) "to the point of making historical comparisons between the two extremely difficult. Nevertheless, a number of key differences suggest that Zhi Qian is indeed the oldest of the two and may represent the earliest of the existing versions of the text – perhaps representing a recension that is much older than even the Sanskrit version;" Gómez 244 n. 3.

[2277] The most popular version of the "long *sūtra*", 無量壽經 T360, which carries an attribution to Saṃghavarman, would date to 252 if that attribution is correct; however, Gómez notes that "modern scholarship has now questioned that attribution. It now seems more likely that the so-called Saṃghavarman translation is at least a reworking by members of the translation workshop of the famous Tang [*sic*] dynasty translator Buddhabhadra (359-429 CE);" Gómez 126. Although Gómez says that it is "in some places archaic, showing traces of several stages of revision", the fact that it is "lengthy and cumbersome" and characterised by "mythical and doctrinal complexity", Gómez 126, suggests that it is a product of a late stage of textual development, and so it is safer on the whole, in the absence of strong evidence to the contrary, to regard it as evidencing a later doctrinal *milieu;* we would certainly not be safe in treating anything in this version as prior to 400 without strong and exceptional evidence. This revision of ascription has more recently been supported by Harrison, Hartmann and Matsuda, who date the text to 421; Harrison, Hartmann and Matsuda 180.

[2278] I.e. the translation of the "long *sūtra*" attributed to Saṃghavarman, and Kumārajīva's "short *sūtra*". On the former, see n. 2282.

[2279] Nattier, "Indian Roots" 191 and n. 32. In Lokakṣema: 佛說阿彌陀佛壽命甚長。威神尊大。智慧光明巍巍快善。乃獨如是。佛言。阿彌陀佛。至其然後。般泥洹者。其蓋樓亘菩薩。便當作佛。總領道智。典主教授。世間及八方上下。所過度諸天人民。蜎飛蠕動之類。皆令得佛泥洹之道。其善福德。當復如大師阿彌陀佛。住止無央數劫。無央數劫不可復計劫。准法大師。爾乃般泥洹。其次摩訶那鉢菩薩。當復作佛。典主智慧。總領教授。所過度福德。當復如大師阿彌陀佛。止住無央數劫。尚復不般泥洹。展轉相承受。經道甚明。國土極善。其法如是。終無有斷絕。不可極也,

eventually enter *parinirvāṇa* would seem to imply that even if the lifespan of a Buddha is understood as inconceivably long here, it is not infinite, that is, we are not yet dealing strictly with complete immortality.

However, it is not clear to me if Nattier has noted the close of the passage to which she points us, which seems clearly to indicate that the last Buddha in this chain, Mahāsthāmaprāpta, in fact does *not* enter *parinirvāṇa*:

> "Like Amitābha Buddha, [Mahāsthāmaprāpta] will remain for an infinite number of *kalpas,* [but he will] still nevermore enter *parinirvāṇa*(尙[2280]復不般泥洹); rather, he will continue on, teaching the way of the scriptures with great clarity, his land exceedingly good. In this same manner, his Dharma will thus be forever without end and illimitable."[2281]

Unless I fail to understand the text correctly, then, it seems clear here that the model that is envisaged is that Amitābha will enter *parinirvāṇa,* as will the *bodhisattva* Avalokiteśvara become Buddha in his turn; but that this chain will stop with Avalokiteśvara's successor, Mahāsthāmaprāpta, *who will not enter parinirvāṇa, but will endure forever.* It thus seems that we have already here in Lokakṣema evidence that absolute immortality is the property of at least one Buddha, but one at a double remove from us – a Buddha who is both remote spatially, in the distant world of Amitābha, and remote temporally, since he will only exist in the very far deferred future after the immense aeons required for the completion of the careers of two other Buddhas before him.

T362.309a12-24. For Zhi Qian, which is similar enough that I will not cite the text here, see T361.291a03-13.

[2280] Var. 常, "forever", "eternally" in Zhi Qian (where variant in the Ming text however also gives 當 "will").

[2281]當復如大師阿彌陀佛。止住無央數劫。尙復不般泥洹。展轉相承。受經道甚明。國土極善。其法如是。終無有斷絕。不可極也, T362.309a22-24; almost verbatim identical in Zhi Qian.

The distance between our own world and the prospect of an immortal Buddha seems to be closed by one of these steps, i.e. temporally, though it still remains immeasurably vast spatially, in a development Nattier identifies in the next stage of the development of the *Sukhāvatīvyūha* literature (represented by the translation attributed to Saṃghavarman, which probably dates to the early fifth century[2282]): Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta are relegated to vestigial roles, with all mention of them inheriting Amitābha's position excised, and all references to Amitābha's death (*parinirvāṇa*) correspondingly disappears.[2283] Thus, it seems clear that it is understood in these later versions of the text that it is possible for a Buddha to be immortal in the present, so long as that Buddha is in a spatially remote world-system. By the date represented by this version of the text, however, as we will see below, developments had gone well beyond this step, and so it is of relatively minor interest for our purposes here. And the fact that it is only the future Buddha that Mahāsthāmaprāpta will become, and not the present Amitābha, who is ascribed with actual immortality in the earlier versions of the texts, is relatively immaterial for our present purposes, since it is still seems that as early as Lokakṣema, it most probably is actual immortality, and not just extreme longevity, is a property of at least one Buddha.[2284]

Even aside from the apparently immortality and non-*parinirvāṇa* of Mahāsthāmaprāpta, moreover, it is already difficult to distinguish, except in a very abstract sense, between the

[2282] See Nattier, "Indian Roots" 189 and n. 28 on the reattribution of this text to Buddhabhadra and Baoyun in modern scholarship.

[2283] Nattier, "Indian Roots" 192.

[2284] Nattier has overlooked the different claims about Mahāsthāmaprāpta in the passage cited immediately above, as is shown by the fact that she understands that even in the later versions of this literature, "the idea that all living beings – including all living Buddhas – must eventually pass away, however distant that date may be, is left in place"; "Indian Roots" 192. Nattier bases this understanding on the fact that T360 (Buddhabhadra/Baoyun) does not mention the *parinirvāṇa* of Amitābha. But in light of the claims about Mahāsthāmaprāpta above, it might be more accurate to say that the understanding that even all Buddhas eventually is *reinstated*.

extreme hyperbolically long lifespans of Buddhas in these texts and utter immortality.[2285] The most representative passages in this regard are the following (here cited from Gómez's translation of the "Saṃghavarman" translation, but matched in essentials by both of the earlier translations):

> "The Buddha said to Ananda, 'The length of the life span of the Buddha of Measureless Life cannot be calculated. Do you want to know to what extent? If, for example, all the numberless living beings in the world systems in ten regions of the universe were to obtain a human body and were all caused to be in full possession of the state of a disciple or solitary buddha, and if they then all gathered and assembled in one place and in deep meditation single-mindedly used the power of their knowledge to determine the length of the life span of this buddha, and, during a hundred, a thousand, or ten thousand cosmic ages, counted, all of them together, they would not succeed in knowing the limits of his life span, even if they counted for many cosmic ages."[2286]
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> "'The same is true of the length of the life span of the assemblies of disciples, bodhisattvas, gods, and humans in that land, which cannot be known by counting or by analogy.'"[2287]

Further passages in both versions of the text reiterate these same doctrines.[2288]

[2285] Of course, one of the names of Amitābha, Amitāyus ("immeasurable life[span]") actually refers to the notion of this extremely long life, which shows how central the idea of extreme longevity was central to the Amitābha/Amitāyus cult. However, Nattier has made it clear that it is unlikely that the name Amitāyus is reflected in any of our earliest evidence for this literature, and this lateness means that this name is little more than an interesting detail for our present purposes. I cannot follow scholars like Iwamatsu Asao and Wogihara Unrai in their hypothesis that the ultimate name underlying the various names of Amitābha is *Amṛta, exciting though such an idea might be in principle. I lay out my reasons for rejecting this theory in Appendix 3 below, p. 1488 ff.

[2286] Gómez 178; cf. also 167, where Amitābha vows that his lifespan will have no limit. In T362, now thought to be by Lokakṣema: 佛告阿逸菩薩。若欲知阿彌陀佛壽命無極時不。對曰。願皆欲聞知之。佛言。明聽。悉令八方上下。諸無央數佛國中。諸天人民。蜎飛蠕動之類。皆使得入道。悉令作辟支佛阿羅漢。共坐禪一心。都合其智慧爲一勇猛。共欲計知阿彌陀佛壽命。幾千億萬劫歲數。皆無有能計知者。復令他方面各千須彌山佛國中。諸天人民。蜎飛蠕動之類。皆復使得入道。悉令作辟支佛阿羅漢。皆令坐禪一心。合其智慧爲一勇猛。共欲數阿彌陀佛國中。諸菩薩阿羅漢。知有幾千億萬人。皆無有能知數者。阿彌陀年壽甚長久。浩浩照照。明善甚深。無極無底誰當能知信其者。獨佛自信知爾; T362.308c27-309a11. This same conceit is repeated as part of the phrasing of the 19th vow, corresponding to Vow 13 in Saṃghavarman; T362.302a16-21. In Zhi Qian, see T361.290c14-291a01.

[2287] Gómez 178; see also the vows at 167. In T362: 其國中悉諸菩薩阿羅漢。無有婦女。壽命無央數劫。女人往生。即化作男子; T362.303c08-09. Once more, this idea is repeated in the 21st vow, corresponding to Saṃghavarman's Vow 15; T362.302a28-30; see also T362.313b16-19. Corresponding passages in the text ascribed to "Lokakṣema" but actually by Zhi Qian: T361.281b22-24; T361.283a20-21; etc.

[2288] T362.308a13-14; T362.308c05-07; T361.281b18-21; T361.290b20-22.

A lifespan this long, surely, already blurs into immortality, and I for one find it somewhat difficult to reconcile this set of ideas with the claim that Amitābha nonetheless eventually does enter *parinirvāṇa*. The analogy used here to impress upon us the genuine incalculability of Amitābha's lifespan is very forceful. Effectively, it says, the greatest conceivable aggregation of intellectual power in the universe, given an effectively limitless amount of time in which to count,[2289] could not count high enough to measure it. Beyond a certain point, it seems to me, it becomes extremely difficult to distinguish between a lifespan this long and an infinite lifespan, that is, between extreme longevity and plain immortality.[2290]

We also find in other texts the doctrine that cosmically remote Buddhas and other kinds of extraordinary beings (extraordinary, that is, from the point of view of the Sahāloka) have extremely long or infinite life. This same notion, in various forms, is attested in a number of

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[2289] Lokakṣema is more vivid on this point than Gómez: 幾千億萬劫歲 etc.

[2290] I am reminded of arguments I have read about in the philosophy of mathematics (I forget where) which state that it is meaningless to conceive of infinity as of any greater magnitude than the highest possible countable number, where "highest possible countable number" is defined by a hypothetical conceit where e.g. a supercomputer is constructed that can count as fast as it is physically possible, e.g. it counts one for every instance of the smallest conceivable physical change in matter (one orbit of an electron around a hydrogen atom, or something suitably minimal at the sub-atomic level). This supercomputer is then set counting at the moment of the Big Bang, for the entire lifespan of the universe. Even if, say, there will be no Big Crunch and the universe will infinitely expand, there will come a point of absolute entropy when all movement, and therefore time, will stop; or, to put it another way, where the expansion of the universe has proceeded to such a point that all the most minute particles are separated from all others by a cosmological (event) horizon, such that there can no longer be interactions between particles, there can therefore no longer be any physical events, and time similarly stops. Say, arbitrarily, this is 10^{30} years, and, also arbitrarily, that the smallest physically meaningful unit of time is 10^{-12} seconds, such a supercomputer could still only count to approx. 3.1536^{50} in all the time available in the entire lifespan of the cosmos. The point is that whatever the precise numbers, there will always be a highest number to which it is possible to count, and the philosophical claim is that it is meaningless to posit any numbers "beyond" such limits, so that "infinity" is an intrinsically incoherent concept beyond such approximations. It seems to me that with due allowance for differences between traditional Indian and modern ideas of cosmology, the most powerful type of computing power, etc., the *Sukhāvatīvyūha-sūtra's* analogy here envisages a precisely parallel scenario, and we must therefore ask in what meaningful sense the lifespan attributed to Amitābha here is not "infinite", or can be said merely to be "very long".

texts very early in the Chinese canon, to the extent that there can be no doubt that it was a major theme in the Mahāyāna reflected by this layer of the textual record. We can represent this trend by citing representative examples of the variations on this theme from works by Lokakṣema, Zhi Qian and Dharmarakṣa, which will suffice to show that these ideas were indeed widespread in the period of their activity.

Thus, we find distributed over a good range of texts prior to 400 C.E. the idea that somewhere remote in time and space, there are one or more Buddhas with extremely long or infinite lifespans, or that there are or were *kalpas,* Buddha-lands, continents etc. in which all beings have such hyperbolically long lifespans.[2291] In some versions of the Prajñāpāramitā texts, it is taken as read that *bodhisattvas* can attain to such lifespans.[2292] The examples given here of each of these ideas could surely be multiplied.[2293]

[2291] E.g. in Lokakṣema's *Druma-kinnara-rāja-paripṛcchā,* T624.362b22-24. In Zhi Qian's **Mahālalikāparipṛcchā-sūtra* a Buddha-world called "Magic Flower" 化華 is prophesied, sixty-eight gazillion *kalpas* in the future, in which all beings will live for a *kalpa,* T559.912b05-13. Various Buddhas have extremely long lifespans of multiple *kalpas* in Dharmarakṣa's *Lotus Sutra,* T263.74b17-26, and a mythical Buddha from another *kalpa* is said to live for twelve "medium *kalpas*", 86b23-27. See also *Tathāgatôtpattisaṃbhavanirdeśa,* also attributed to Dharmarakṣa, T291.597a25-27. So too future Buddhas in Dharmarakṣa's **Mañjuśribuddhakṣetraguṇavyūha,* T318.895c14-20; and, in the same text, a Buddha and perhaps other denizens in a distant Buddha-world, 897c25-29; and another in his **Sarvapuṇyasamuccayasamādhi-sūtra* (其佛壽命無有限量), T381.981b20-23. A past Buddha had infinite lifespan in Dharmarakṣa's *Bhadrakalpita-sūtra* (有佛號金龍決光。其壽不可限量) T425.10b09-13; etc. etc.

It is worth noting, against e.g. Guang Xing 120, who treats them under the same rubric as the "lifespan" chapters considered below (see p. 1066 ff.), that strictly speaking, the short chapters on lifespan found in various versions of the *Avataṃsaka-sūtra* belong to this same category. It is said there that an entire *kalpa* in this world of Śākyamuni is merely a day and a night in the world of Amitābha; an entire *kalpa* in the world of Amitābha is merely a day and a night in the world of another buddha; and so on, in seven iterations spelt out in detail, and then a generalised assertion that this series continues to "a million *asaṃkhyeya* worlds"! – before finally we are told about the Lotus world of Samantabhadra, which is characterised by absolutely mindbogglingly large scales of time, and is filled with *mahāsattva;* T278.589c01-19 (Buddhabhadra), T279.241a16-b05 (Śikṣānanda). Clearly, if these *mahāsattva* inhabit a world where a single day is the *kalpa* of this world raised to the power of infinity, they must live rather a long time; but in light of the chronological distribution of ideas I identify here, I would urge that we must carefully observe the distinction between passages like this and passages which directly assert extreme longevity *of Śākyamuni himself*.

[2292] In Dharmarakṣa's *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā* the Buddha countenances the notion that a *bodhisattva-mahāsattva* (開士大士) who has attained the six powers could travel to a Buddha-world characterised by a lifespan so long it cannot be counted in an entire *kalpa*, T222.156c16-19. A *bodhisattva* who wishes to

In some of the cases just mentioned, however, we find the same combination observed by Nattier in the earlier versions of the Longer *Sukhāvatīvyūha,* that is, the Buddhas concerned have extremely long lifespans, but the text also still clearly speaks of their eventual *parinirvāṇa.*[2294]

However, in other cases beginning at least as early as the Dharmarakṣa corpus (translated in the latter half of the third century C.E.), we find, in the same texts that assert the extreme longevity of the Buddha(s), the outright assertion that the *parinirvāṇa* is a mere show. For example, in the *Tathāgatôtpattisaṃbhavanirdeśa* (a part of the proto-*Avataṃsaka* corpus) attributed to Dharmarakṣa,[2295] we are told that the Buddha does not really enter into *parinirvāṇa,* because he is completely identical to an interfused with the *dharmadhātu* (of all *dharmas;* 如來皆入一切法界); that his apparent *parinirvāṇa* is a mere show (recalling the docetistic Buddhalogy

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attain, among other things, "limitless lifespan" 壽無量 should practice the *prajñāpāramitā,* 151b19-25. In a list of things you should not fixate on ("take your stand in", in Conze's translation), we find 不當住無央數壽命, T222.212a15-19, also in Mokṣala's version of 291 CE at T221.39b20-25, cf. Conze's English trans. of Skt., 97. In Dharmarakṣa's *Du shi pin jing* 度世品經, lifespan that is both incalculable and without limit is said to be one of the ten respects in which the *bodhisattva* is powerful 自在 (計其所壽。無央數劫。而無窮極), T292.633a29-b01.

2293 We also find the idea of extremely long periods of time featuring in hyperbolic arguments about the immense amount of merit that accrues to certain practices ("more than the merit you would gain if you spent a Ganges-sands-worth of *kalpas* feeding a gazillion Buddhas every day" etc.). It has to be noted here that it is quite likely that the conceit intended here is that the aspirant might work for such merit over many sequential lifetimes spanning the period named, rather than a single very long lifetime; I am grateful to Professor Nattier for pointing out to me this possibility, which I overlooked in an earlier draught. See e.g. in Lokakṣema's *Aṣṭa* T224.430c16-18, b18-24; Zhi Qian's *Aṣṭa* T225.483b17-22, in another obscure passage at 487b07-15, 496a09-17; his *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa* T474.533c03-05.

2294 See, in the order cited above, Lokakṣema's *Druma*, T624.362b24-c01; in Ch. 1 of Dharmarakṣa's *Lotus,* a Buddha is long-lived enough to preach the same *sūtra* for sixty minor *kalpas* on end, but nonetheless enters *parinirvāṇa* (般泥洹), T263.66b08-10, Hurvitz 15, Watson 16; Dharmarakṣa's *Bhadrakalpita-sūtra,* e.g. 滅度之後舍利分布, T425.29c14; 44b18-19; as a preface to the production of relics, *Du shi pin jing,* T292.624a22-23, 624c25.

2295 See Boucher, diss. 276.

of e.g. LAn) (見滅度而不滅度); and that this docetistic show of apparent *parinirvāṇa* is to be understood on the analogy to a magician's illusion (假喻幻師善學幻術 etc.); this is of a piece with the fact that his very body is also a docetistic show (猶如幻化現如來身).[2296]

In a doctrine that has clear echoes of LAn docetistic Buddhalogy even down to some of its precise details, the *Du shi pin jing,* also translated by Dharmarakṣa and also part of the proto-*Avataṃsaka* corpus, says that the first of ten respects in which the *bodhisattva* is "inconceivable" (*acintya*) is precisely that he never enters into *nirvāṇa,* but rather makes a show of all the acts of a Buddha (顯諸佛事; acts enumerated include entry into the womb and birth, ascetic practice, sitting under the *bodhi* tree and vanquishing Māra etc.). Among the acts that are stated to be such a docetistic display is entry into *parinirvāṇa* (現取滅度). In contrast to the appearances given by this show of *parinirvāṇa,* the text assures us that the *bodhisattva* "never relinquishes his great compassion and the protection of sentient beings, and never breaks his original vow" (顯諸佛事。建立所現。不捨大哀護諸眾生。不違本願).[2297] These ideas are echoed elsewhere in the same text.[2298]

A similar view, that in the correct understanding the Buddha has never entered into [*pari-*]*nirvāṇa* and his Dharma is never extinguished, seems to be advanced in Dharmarakṣa's

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[2296] T291.611c29-612a17.

[2297] T292.625b05-12.

[2298] Often in ways that similarly echo LAn's basic idea that the standardised *bodhisattva*/Buddha career is all a show. See: 又其菩薩。現習生死。又現取滅度。不於泥洹而永滅度。是第八樂, T292.634c28-635a01; also the "show of *mahāparinirvāṇa*" 現大滅度, listed as one respect in which the Buddha's "mind is universal (?),638b01; 解諸佛身。無有諸漏。現來入胎。出生在俗。棄國捐王。成最正覺。而轉法輪。示大滅度, T292.645b15-17. Note that these ideas exist side by side in the text with other passages, already noted at n. 2294, which speak uncomplicatedly of the *parinirvāṇa* of the Buddha.

**Sarvapuṇyasamuccayasamādhi-sūtra* .[2299] These ideas are combined in this text with the exposition of the originally pure *dharmadhātu* (or *sarvadharma* as originally pure) as a kind of original *nirvāṇa.*[2300] Further, at the end of this text, the story of the Buddha predicting his own death in three months, and Ānanda lamenting it and asking him to remain for a *kalpa,* takes on possibly related overtones, in which it is specifically said that for anyone who upholds the *dharma, the Buddha does not enter parinirvāṇa* and the *dharma* is not extinguished (則爲其人佛不滅度法不滅盡); and that "for one who has this *dharma,* the Buddha exists for ever" (具足是法者佛則永存).[2301] In other words, it seems here, too, that the particular emphasis in this version of an old narrative has shifted to the idea of the Buddha's ongoing, permanent survival of his (therefore apparent) *nirvāṇa.*

These examples show clearly, I believe, that even I have misread Lokakṣema's *Sukhāvatīvyūha* above, and it does not say that Mahāsthāmaprāpta is exempt from *parinirvāṇa,* the idea that the Buddha(s) is/are exempt from *parinirvāṇa* was certainly established by the time of Dharmarakṣa's translation corpus. The immediate combination of this idea with the claim that the apparent *parinirvāṇa* was only a docetistic show is very interesting, because the docetistic interpretation of *parinirvāṇa* is almost a logical *sine qua non* of the extension of the notion of actual immortality or extreme longevity to our Buddha, Śākyamuni; and as we shall see below, the first inklings we have of the actual immortality of Śākyamuni date to precisely this period, in Dharmarakṣa's *Lotus* (though this is as yet in its time quite an isolated example, and this idea

[2299] 當作是觀。於樂法菩薩。如來未曾取滅度。正法之教亦無滅盡, T381.980b01-02. Cf. elsewhere in the same text 現佛境界常無永絕。雖已泥洹而不滅度, 986c07-08.

[2300]一切諸法本淨滅度, T381.982c14-15, 983a13; 本性清淨本性明達本淨滅度, 984b29-c01, etc.

[2301] This is then combined with the Vakkali notion that one does not see the Buddha in his *rūpa* or his marks, but in the *dharma* (without any reference to the corporeal conceit) (不當以色觀如來也。亦非相好。若覩此法則爲見佛), T381.988c06-17.

becomes much more frequent in texts a century or so later). Conversely, we might also expect that there is no logical necessity for a docetistic corollary to the doctrine of immortality in the case of cosmically remote Buddhas, since it is not necessarily the case that such remote Buddhas are already said to have apparently entered *parinirvāṇa.*

The most striking examples we have had occasion to cite in this course of this discussion have been from the proto-*Avataṃsaka* corpus. It seems possible that the *Avataṃsaka* corpus more generally took up with particular enthusiasm the docetistic Buddhalogy whose first appearance I traced in LAn in Chapter 4.2, and if this is indeed the case, it may be additionally significant that in Chapter 4.5 we saw some evidence that the opposition between *dharmakāya* and *rūpakāya* also seems to first appear with particular frequency in proto-*Avataṃsaka* literature in the same period. This may suggest that the notion of *rūpakāya* is particularly associated with the docetistic interpretation of the Buddha's last earthly existence and body, which I argued in Chapter 4.2 is systematically related to the notion that the Buddha is in fact most veritably embodied in *dharma* or *dharmatā* itself (a claim, indeed, that we just saw associated with the docetistic interpretation of the *parinirvāṇa* in the *Tathāgatôtpattisaṃbhavanirdeśa* passage quoted immediately above). This possibility in turn lends further support to my contention, in Chapter 4.5, that the concept of *rūpakāya* may at its origin place more emphasis on the Buddha's final earthly body as a *visible* rather than a *material, tangible* body, which I connected to the frequent use of the concept in the context of the "Vakkali" concern with *darśan.*

Before we leave this question of when these ideas first appear in our record, we should also recall the evidence of the *Niraupamyastava* attributed to Nāgārjuna, already noted above in connection with our discussion of the emergence of docetistic Buddhalogy. As we saw there, v. 22 of that text specifically states that the *parinirvāṇa* of the Buddha was a mere docetistic

show.[2302] However, we also noted there that this verse is only one of a number of reasons that the doctrine of the *Niraupamyastava* is extremely unusual for what we would otherwise take to be the state of Buddhist ideas in the period of Nāgārjuna; in this case, we might note that no other text among those we examined as articulating docetistic Buddhalogy, including even the otherwise very rich and detailed *Lokânuvartanā-sūtra,* applied the basic docetistic conceit to the *parinirvāṇa* in this manner. We should certainly, therefore, be cautious about hanging too many general conclusions about the overall shape of development in Buddhist ideas on such a piece of evidence, though we must also of course note it for the record.

We can imagine that several reasons might have lain behind the development of these ideas that Buddhas (and, often, other beings) in temporally or spatially remote worlds enjoy extreme longevity or immortality.

Jan Nattier has argued, first, that the location of Buddhas in spatially remote world-systems was one work-around for the problems created by the rule that there could only be one Buddha in "the world" at a time. In brief, this problem was solved in part by the discovery that there is more than one "world", and that *each* world can have a Buddha, even simultaneously.[2303] This expands dramatically the "job opportunities" for followers of the *bodhisattva* vocation, who, instead of waiting in a long queue of aspirants in a single world system, where each Buddha's "turn" could last for 560,000,000 or 5,600,000,000 years.[2304] Thus, in one direction, spatially remote Buddha-lands may have been a necessary if not sufficient condition for the idea of

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[2302] See above p. 672.

[2303] Nattier, "Indian Roots" 186.

[2304] Nattier, "Indian Roots" 183-185, 186. Nattier also speculates that these "parallel universes" fulfilled the additional function of increasing the opportunities to be in the presence of a living Buddha, which itself was a necessary condition to fulfilment of certain aspects of the *bodhisattva* ideal.

actual extreme longevity at least in the sense that in the case of such worlds, lesser pressures existed to ensure that each Buddha got out of the way in a timely manner and cleared the way for other *bodhisattvas* further down the line.

Nattier has also suggested that, whereas long lifespans of past Buddhas ("a long time ago") may be motivated by general cosmological considerations,[2305] a different logic may lie behind the ascription of very long life to spatially remote Buddhas. She argues that the long lifespan of a spatially remote Buddha is as a logical component of the overall logic whereby these Buddhas and their worlds create ideal conditions for beings reborn there: "It would be sad indeed if one fulfilled in this Sahā world all the prerequisites for rebirth in Abhirati or Sukhāvatī, only to find, upon arriving there, that the Buddha in question had passed away!"[2306] On this front, then, there may have been a positive pull towards extreme longevity for such Buddhas. Not only was there room, in a universe of potentially innumerable world systems, for Buddhas to live as long as they liked (so to speak), but there was good reason to hope that at least some of them would do so, in order that rebirth into their world be a goal worth aspiring to.

To use a metaphor that might be found crass or offensive, we might summarise these two possible motivating factors behind the development of the idea of extreme longevity or immortality for cosmically remote Buddhas as "supply"- and "demand"-side factors. On the one hand, would-be "suppliers" of Buddha-services, i.e. *bodhisattvas,* were served by this idea because it gave them outlets for their efforts. When the "grace" model of rebirth in Buddha-

[2305] Indeed, as we have seen above, long lifespan is not attributed uniquely to those Buddhas, but to all people of the respective world-ages of these Buddhas.

[2306] *A Few Good Men* 178.

lands developed, "consumers" of such services were also served by this idea, because it offered a secure source of the Buddhas they needed.

To this we can also add, perhaps, that another condition that shaped the emergence of this ideal in the case of remote Buddha-worlds may have been analogy with the wonderful longevity of the gods in various elevated heavens, which we observed above in a number of Pāli-canonical passages, may also have formed a remote antecedent for these ideas. Buddha-lands like Sukhāvatī are recognisably variations on old "heavens", with a Buddhist twist.[2307] We might also note (as we shall see below) that it is not only the Buddhas of these lands, but also, in some cases, their other denizens who enjoy very long life, so that the analogy with an entire Heaven of the Thirty-Three populated by happy Methuselahs is even closer.

In sum, then, to review the findings of this section, it seems that certainly as early as we can go in our post-Pāli-canonical record, the idea had already developed that cosmically remote Buddhas had inordinately long lifespans. The evidence of the *Akṣobhyavyūha* may indicate that this is an older stage in the development of the ideas that concern us here. If I am correct in my reading of Lokakṣema's earlier *Sukhāvatīvyūha,* however, then we also find already, at this same time, the notion that a Buddha might even be entirely exempt from *parinirvāṇa,* and therefore effectively immortal, in claims made by that text about Mahāsthāmaprāpta, at a double remove – spatial and temporal – where he is not only a denizen of a cosmically remote world, but also imagined very far in the future. In any case, it seems clear that by the stage of development witnessed by Dharmarakṣa's translations, that is, probably by the middle of the third century at the latest, the idea that a Buddha, or Buddhas in general, in fact do not enter *parinirvāṇa* was current in at least some contexts. If I am mistaken in my reading of

[2307] Nattier also makes this observation, "Indian Roots" 187.

Mahāsthāmaprāpta, then, it seems most likely that we do indeed see in the texts two phases: an earlier stage in which Buddhas, at least in other world-systems, are extremely long-lived but ultimately mortal; and a second stage in which Buddhas are exempt from *parinirvāṇa* and entirely immortal.

In the texts we have treated thus far in analysing the emergence of these ideas, however, we also notice that certain ideas are missing; as I said above, these texts are predominated by their attention on what is the case "a long time ago" or "in galaxies far, far away". By contrast, as we shall see immediately, I have only been able to find in all this period *one* instance (in the *Lotus Sūtra* of Dharmarakṣa) of the idea that the Buddha of the current world-age and world-system is immortal. We also find, when we move forward a little further in the Chinese textual record, that new ideas about the immortality of *our* Buddha are accompanied by a number of other new ideas that link immortality to special kinds of embodiment, and other related ideas, none of which can be found in the texts of this earlier period. I now turn to the examination of those new ideas, beginning with the single anomalous instance[2308] of a passage that asserts the immortality of our Buddha before about 400 C.E. in the Chinese record.

5.1.4 The first apparent ascription of immortality to Śākyamuni in Dharmarakṣa's *Lotus*

The "Lifespan" chapter of the earlier version of the *Lotus Sūtra,* by Dharmarakṣa,[2309] reportedly translated in 286,[2310] contains the earliest statements I have found yet that the lifespan of the

[2308] See §1.3.7 for a general discussion of the methodological problem presented by such single anomalous instances. In the present case, it seems to me that the evidence in this text is clear enough, and the date of Dharmarakṣa close enough to the texts we will examine below where the same concepts are much more plentifully attested, that we need not be too suspicious of this particular instance, since it does not comprise too massive an irregularity in the overall pattern of the evidence.

[2309] Dharmarakṣa was born to a Dunhuang Yuezhi family, and worked in Luoyang and other locations between about 265 and 313 (or 308); he died at Mianchi near Luoyang sometime after 310, and is supposed to have been 78 years of age when he died. *Hôbôgirin* 259; see also the translation of his biography from the *Gao seng zhuan* T2059 in Lamotte, *Marche,* 83-85.

current Buddha of *this* world-system is in fact measureless or infinite. There, though the Chinese is a little difficult to make out in places, it seems clear that Śākyamuni himself is in fact immortal, and his apparent *parinirvāṇa* is a docetistic show.[2311]

We first learn that the Buddha Śākyamuni's lifespan is in fact immense, and that the apparent events of his last lifetime other than the *parinirvāṇa* were merely a docetistic show:

> "All the *devas, nāgas, asuras,* and men in all the worlds think that they know, and believe to themselves, that the current (?能仁, Skt. *sāṃprata*) Śākyamuni set out from the land of the Śākyas, renouncing kingdom and kingship; travelled to the bank of the river; betook himself to the seat of awakening (道場, *bodhimaṇḍa*) and sat under the tree; and attained to the unsurpassed correct path and realised supreme perfect awakening. And yet, [in fact,] I already attained to true, unsurpassed awakening in the very remote past, countless myriads of millions of *nayutas* of *kalpas* ago."[2312]

This declaration is followed by a particularly involved and mind-boggling analogy for the incalculable number of years that have passed since the Buddha in fact attained his awakening;[2313] through all this time he has been teaching constantly in this Sahā world and in countless other worlds also.[2314]

2310 In his *Buddhist Conquest of China,* 343 n. 221, Zürcher has analysed the dates given in colophons of works attributed to Dharmarakṣa in the *Chu sanzang ji ji*. This list includes a 正法華經記, which gives the date of first translation as 286, with revision in 288; a further 正法華經後記 "describes the copying and oral explanation of this scripture at Luoyang in 290". Text of the 正法華經記 at T2145.56c17-24.

2311 In the following summary of these ideas, I will of course be describing these ideas precisely as they appear in the Dharmarakṣa version of the text, but I will provide cross-references to Skt. versions and English translations for the reader's convenience.

2312 諸天龍神阿須倫世間人。各自知之各自念言。能仁世尊從釋氏土。棄國捐王行至江邊。就于道場坐於樹下。逮得無上正真道成最正覺。又吾在昔從無數億百千那術姟劫以來。已成至真等正覺矣, T263.113b01-06; Kern and Nanjio 316, Vaidya 189, Hurvitz 237, Watson 225.

2313 T263.113b06-27, Kern and Nanjio 316-317, Vaidya 190-191, Hurvitz 237-238, Watson 225.

2314 見吾於此忍界講法。復在他方億百千姟諸佛世界而示現。皆悉稱吾為如來至真等正覺, T263.113b27-29.

We are then informed that the apparent *parinirvāṇa* of Buddhas like Dīpaṃkara was merely a docetistic show, an expedient means manifested by Śākyamuni himself, just as he manifests the teaching of the Dharma in this world.[2315] The Buddha then begins to expound upon the nature and operation of expedient means (*upāya*), and the first example he gives of the principle that he suits the "names and words he manifests" to the mental capacities of his hearers (悉觀其心而隨示現各爲名號) is that he "speaks of [*pari-*]*nirvāṇa,* even though I do not enter into extinction" (亦不滅度而說泥洹).[2316] Thus, it seems clear not only that the Buddha's lifespan is incalculably long, and that the *parinirvāṇa* of other Buddhas like Dīpaṃkara is a docetistic show, but also that Śākyamuni's *parinirvāṇa* is a show, and therefore that he is in fact immortal.

As Dharmarakṣa's version of the chapter progresses the claim that the Buddha has in fact been awakened since time immemorial is repeated, in tandem with the explanation that it is only as an expedient teaching device that he makes it appear a recent event.[2317] It is in accord with the dictates of *upāya,* the text has the Buddha say further that,

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[2315] Dharmarakṣa's Chinese is difficult here, but the gist of it, in intention at least, seems to correspond to the clearer Sanskrit: 諸族姓子等。見吾於此忍界講法。復在他方億百千姟諸佛世界而示現。皆悉稱吾爲如來至真等正覺錠光如來。以諸伴黨若干之數<u>而現滅度</u>。諸族姓子。吾以善權方便。演說經典。現無央數種種瑞應 [reading **nimittāni* in error for *nirmtāni*?], T263.113b27-c02; for *yataḥ prabhṛty ahaṃ kulaputrā asyāṃ sahāyāṃ lokadhātau sattvānāṃ dharmaṃ deśayāmi, anyeṣu ca lokadhātukoṭīnayutaśatasahasreṣu, ye ca mayā kulaputrā atrāntarā tathāgatā arhantaḥ samyaksaṃbuddhāḥ parikīrtitā dīpaṃkaratathāgataprabhṛtayaḥ, teṣāṃ ca tathāgatānāmarhatāṃ samyaksaṃbuddhānāṃ* <u>*parinirvāṇāni, mayaiva tāni kulaputrā upāyakauśalyadharmadeśanābhinirhāranirmitāni*</u>, Kern and Nanjio 317, Vaidya 190. I am not convinced that Kumārajīva (or Hurvitz and Watson) translates entirely accurately here; Hurvitz 238, Watson 225-226.

[2316] T263.113c03-05; cf. Skt. *tasmiṃstasminnātmano nāma vyāharati | tasmiṃstasmiṃścātmanaḥ parinirvāṇaṃ vyāharati;* also Hurvitz 238, Watson 226.

[2317] 這度終始方今出家。成平等覺從來未久。甫乃逮得無上正真道成最正覺。又如來成佛已來甚久。故佛說言。得佛未久。所以者何。欲化眾生故, T263.113c08-11, T263.113c10, *acirābhisaṃbuddho 'smi bhikṣavo 'nuttarāṃ samyaksaṃbodhim | yat khalu punaḥ kulaputrāḥ, tathāgata evaṃ cirābhisaṃbuddha evaṃ vyāharati - acirābhisaṃbuddho 'hamasmīti, nānyatra sattvānāṃ paripācanārtham*, Vaidya 190, Kern and Nanjio 318.

" . . . wishing to make sentient beings plant the roots of the various virtues (*sarvakuśalamūla*), I discriminate and teach for them various *dharmas* (Skt. *vividhān dharmaparyāyān vividhair ārambaṇair vyāharati*); [and so,] although in fact [I have long since] accomplished all that a Tathāgata ought to accomplish, I make a show of attaining buddhahood here and now. [In reality] it is an immensely long time since I attained buddhahood and realised *saṃyaksaṃbodhi;* [my] lifespan is immeasurable; [I] endures forever, and do not become extinct (壽命無量常住不滅度; *aparimitāyuṣpramāṇas tathāgataḥ sadā sthitaḥ; aparinirvṛtas tathāgataḥ*).[2318]

"In fact, it would not be possible for me to fulfil the limit of my lifespan even in all the time I have practiced *bodhisattva* practices through all my past lives, even from the very beginning; nor even in twice the enormous span of time since I became Buddha, as conveyed by the analogy I gave earlier. Nonetheless, I [say I] am 'about to enter *parinirvāṇa* in the *nirvāṇa*[*dhātu* without remainder[2319]]'. Why is this? In order to convert sentient beings."[2320]

The Buddha goes on to explain that if he did not engage in this expedient, sentient beings would be complacent and distracted by the pursuit of sense-objects and worldly goods, and would not engage in religious practice. The Buddha thus preaches that the Tathāgata is rare in the world, even though he is in fact ever present, in order to make them seize the moment and practise diligently.[2321]

[2318] 欲令眾生殖眾德本。故爲分別說若干法。又如來所當作者皆悉作之。現這得佛。又如來所當作者皆悉作之。現這得佛。成平等覺已來大久。壽命無量常住不滅度, T263.113c20-23. *sattvānāṃ . . . kuśalamūlasaṃjananārthaṃ vividhān dharmaparyāyān vividhair ārambaṇair vyāharati | yad dhi kulaputrās tathāgatena kartavyaṃ tat tathāgataḥ karoti | tāvac cirābhisaṃbuddho 'parimitāyuṣpramāṇas tathāgataḥ sadā sthitaḥ | aparinirvṛtas tathāgataḥ.* Skt. continues, in a claim not paralleled in Dharmarakṣa but not out of keeping with its spirit, *parinirvāṇam ādarśayati vaineyavaśena,* "I show a *parinirvāṇa* out of an intent to convert [sentient beings];" Kern and Nanjio 318-319, Vaidya 190.

[2319] 於泥洹而般泥洹. This reads like the formula for **parinirvāṇadhātau parinir/vā,* but the actual words "*dhātu* without remainder" are missing.

[2320] 又如來不必初始。所說前過去世時行菩薩法。以爲成就壽命限也。又如來得佛已來。復倍前喻。億百千姟。然後乃於泥洹而般泥洹[Ming only: all other texts 曰] 。所以者何。爲眾生故而教化之, T263.113c23-28; *na ca tāvan me kulaputrā adyāpi paurvikī bodhisattvacaryâ*[reading w. K & N against V -*āṃ*]*parinispāditā | āyuṣpramāṇam apy aparipūrṇam | api tu khalu punaḥ kulaputrā adyāpi taddviguṇena me kalpakoṭīnayutaśatasahasrāṇi bhaviṣyanti āyuṣpramāṇasyāparipūrṇatvāt | idānīṃ khalu punar ahaṃ kulaputrā aparinirvāyamāṇa eva parinirvāṇamārocayāmi | tat kasya hetoḥ? sattvānahaṃ kulaputrā anena paryāyeṇa paripācayāmi,* Kern and Nanjio 319, Vaidya 190-191; cf. Hurvitz 239, Watson 227. Both Hurvitz and Watson have the Buddha's lifespan actually ending after twice the limit described in the analogy earlier in the chapter, but I believe this interpretation is erroneous.

[2321] T263.113c27- 114a10, Kern and Nanjio 319-320, Vaidya 191, Hurvitz 239-240, Watson 227.

Some of these ideas are repeated later in the chapter, and of course also especially in the verse summary with which it ends, but this much will suffice for our purposes here. It is clear from this chapter that already in Dharmarakṣa's time, the understanding that Śākyamuni himself is in fact immortal had taken root, at least in the *Lotus* context. Śākyamuni is presented as the only real Buddha (or else perhaps it is more accurate to say that there is only one Buddha, of whom Śākyamuni and other Buddhas are mere emanations for expedient means), and he is in fact eternal. This is conjoined to the docetistic interpretation of the *parinirvāṇa*.

These passages in Dharmarakṣa's *Lotus* make it the earliest text that takes the final step in the development we are tracing here and applies the idea of the actual immortality of the Buddhas to Śākaymuni himself. Though my usual caveats apply to such large-scale statements about the entire Chinese record,[2322] with the single exception of this text, I have been unable to find any direct mention of the limitless lifespan of Śākyamuni in any text surely and substantially predating c. 400 C.E. in the Chinese record. This may mean that the *Lotus* plays a particularly central role in this final step of cementing the doctrine of immortality of the Buddhas in place, by generalising it to the case closest to home.

The idea of Śākyamuni's immortality was not to remain a monopoly of the *Lotus* for very long, however, even if this evidence in Dharmarakṣa reflects an historical truth and perhaps it did start that way. Around 400 C.E., however, there is nothing short of an explosion of texts containing the idea that Śākyamuni, like other Buddhas long ago, far away, or yet to come, is virtually or actually immortal. In what follows, we will survey some of the most representative examples of this new trend in ideas. We will also discuss the dates of the texts containing these

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[2322] I remind my reader here of the caveats laid out in the introduction to this section (at p. 1034) about the limits of the searches upon which I rely for generalisations such as this one. It is possible that further exceptions exist to the patterns I identify here, other than those I have picked up in my own research.

ideas, and the strong association of these ideas in the Chinese record with the period around the turn of the fifth century.

5.1.5 An explosion of new ideas about immortality and extreme longevity in the Chinese record around 400

Looking first, then, just at ideas about the extreme longevity or immortality of the present Buddha, the new trend portraying the Buddha of the current world-age as immortal is exemplified best by various dedicated chapters on longevity in Mahāyāna scriptures. In keeping with the fact that the earliest known locus of the doctrine of the Buddha's power to achieve immense longevity is found in DN 16, the Pāli *Mahāparinibbāna-sutta,* the most extensive treatment of the doctrine in the Mahāyāna *sūtra* corpus is found in the relevant chapters of the Mahāyāna version of that same text.

Chapter Four of the Mahāyāna *Mahāparnirvāṇa-sūtra* is entitled "On Long Life" (長壽品).[2323] After some lengthy scene-setting depicting in tireless detail the extreme distress and gnashing of teeth occasioned in a vast cosmic panoply of beings by the Tathāgata's imminent demise, it is revealed that the Buddha's lifespan is in fact incalculably long. "O all good men and women! You cannot calculate the length of my life."[2324] He is asked how *bodhisattvas* can similarly attain such long life – and an adamant, indestructible body[2325] (we will return to this connection below) – and the Buddha replies by explaining that the *bodhisattva* should do as he himself has done in former lives, i.e. show compassion towards all beings as if they are his own children; teach

[2323] Direct English quotations in the following treatment of the MPNS have been taken from the translation of Yamamoto Kōshō, which is unpaginated in the version to which I have access. I have in places modified the translation, transcription of Sanskrit terms etc.

[2324] 我之壽命不可稱量; T375.619b02-03.

[2325] 云何得長壽/金剛不壞身; T375.619b22.

them various good practices; save beings in various evil destinies, and so on.[2326] In other words, the Buddha's extreme longevity is clearly understood as the fruit of the immense merit accumulated through countless incarnations of *bodhisattva* practices.

Kasyapa confronts the Buddha with the apparent contradiction between these statements and the fact that he appears to be on the brink of death before living even a hundred years in the world,[2327] and in response the Buddha again asserts that his life is the longest of all:[2328] his life is to the lives of ordinary individual beings like the waters of the great ocean to the waters of all the rivers of the world and their tributaries,[2329] and so forth. This immense longevity of the Buddha is described by in the same terms ("a *kalpa* . . .") as in the Pāli *Mahāparinibbāna-sutta,*[2330] and as there, is also related to the superpowers.[2331] Such powers, it is explained, are accessible even to lesser beings, let alone the Tathāgata, and in fact, if the Tathāgata so wished, he could live for "half a *kalpa*, a *kalpa*, one hundred *kalpas*, one hundred thousand *kalpas*, or innumerable *kalpas*".[2332] As we will see below, Kasyapa's question here motivates the introduction into the text of a direct statement of a docetistic doctrine that carries implications for doctrines of

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[2326] 菩薩亦爾。欲得長壽應當護念一切眾生同於子想。生大慈大悲大喜大捨。授不殺戒教修善法。亦當安止一切眾生於五戒十善。復入地獄餓鬼畜生阿修羅等一切諸趣。拔濟是中苦惱眾生。脫未脫者。度未度者。未涅槃者令得涅槃。安慰一切諸恐怖者; T375.620b03-09.

[2327] T375.621a22-b04.

[2328] 如來長壽於諸壽中。最上最勝; T375.621b05-06.

[2329] T375.621b09-14.

[2330] See the discussion of DN 16 above, p. 1039. Seemingly the phrase is somehow slightly mistranslated in the Chinese: 應住一劫若減一劫; T375.621b21, b24.

[2331] T375.621b23-28.

[2332] 豈況如來於一切法得自在力。而當不能住壽半劫若一劫若百劫若百千劫若無量劫; T375.621b28-c01.

embodiment. For the moment, however, it suffices to observe that the text thus directly states the doctrine that Śākyamuni Buddha is, in truth, immortal.

This doctrine is also found in a number of other texts.

In the "Lifespan" chapter of the *Lotus Sūtra* (Chapter 16),[2333] as we have already seen in our discussion of the Dharmarakṣa version above, the Buddha explains that despite the appearance given to the world that he left the palace and was enlightened etc. in this lifetime, he was in fact already awakened an immeasurable span of time ago.[2334] The Buddha says explicitly, "My life span is an immeasurable number of *asaṃkhyakalpas*, and during that time I have constantly abided here without ever entering extinction."[2335] It is only as an expedient means that he says that his appearance in the world is a rare thing or that he is about to enter into extinction; he makes these assertions that sentient beings may feel the urgency of the task of working out their salvation.[2336]

Similarly, in the "Chapter on the Measure of Life of the Tathāgata" (Chapter 2) in the *Sūtra of Golden Light* (*Suvarṇabhāsottama-sūtra*),[2337] the Bodhisattva is troubled by the question of "why the Lord Śākyamuni had such a short measure of life (*āyuḥpramāṇaṃ*) as eighty years"; "There are two causes, two reasons for long life . . . . Refraining from killing living beings and giving

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[2333] These passages are discussed in Guang 119-120.

[2334] Watson 225; Hurvitz 238; T263 (Dharmarakṣa), 113b19-27.

[2335] Watson 227; Hurvitz 239. Watson translates from Kumārajīva; Dharmarakṣa only has the assertion that it is an incalculable number of *kalpas* since he was awakened, and not the statement that his lifetime is immeasurably long: 吾逮無上正真道成最正覺已來其劫之限。過於爾所塵數之劫, 113b25-27.

[2336] Watson 227-228; Hurvitz 239-240.

[2337] See also Guang 121.

away food," and therefore Śākyamuni should have had very long life indeed, in view of his virtuous acts in all his former lives.[2338] Four Buddhas appear and tell him, "Think not so, noble son, (that) the measure of life of the Lord Śākyamuni was so brief . . . . We do not see anyone in the world of gods, [etc.] . . . who would be able to understand to the furthest end the limit of the measure of the life of the Tathāgata."[2339] They then pronounce verses saying that in fact, his life is more countless than drops of water in the ocean, atoms in Mt Sumeru, atoms on earth etc., and this precisely because he has refrained from killing living beings and given much food, even including his own body.[2340]

The *Śūraṃgamasamādhi-sūtra*[2341] also features a short section on extreme longevity as a fruit of the "heroic march". Dṛḍhamati asks the Buddha how long his life will be, and the Buddha tells him about a world (*lokadhātu*) in the East called Pratimaṇḍitā, in which dwells a Tathāgata called Vairocanaraśmipratimaṇḍitavikurvaṇarāja. The Buddha's lifespan is equal to this Tathāgata's lifespan, which is "seven hundred *asaṃkhyeyakalpa*";[2342] and the Buddha seals the deal by spelling out the moral explicitly: "Thus, you should know that the duration of my life (*āyuṣpramāṇa*) will be seven hundred *asaṃkhyeyakalpa* and that after that, I will enter definitively into *parinirvāṇa*."[2343] The text goes on to imply that such a duration of life is achievable for all beings by the power of the *śūraṃgamasamādhi,* and further specifies that "in

[2338] Emmerick 3, Nobel 6.

[2339] Emmerick 4.

[2340] Emmerick 5.

[2341] Discussed in Guang 120.

[2342] Lamotte, *Marche,* 267-270.

[2343] Lamotte, 270: "Donc il faut savoir que ma durée de vie sera de sept cents *asaṃkhyayakalpa* et qu'ensuite j'entrerai définitivement dans le Parinirvāṇa." In the following section, this longevity seems to be associated with *ṛddhi*; Lamotte, *Marche* 271.

all kingdoms, villages, towns, cities, residences and wildernesses that are penetrated *śūraṃgamasamādhi*, neither Māra nor Māra's ilk (*mārajātīya*) will exercise any hold (*avatāraṃ na lapsyante*)."[2344]

The **Mahāprajñāpāramitā-śāstra* clearly teaches that the Buddha has an immeasurable lifespan in several passages.[2345] The text accounts for the apparent discrepancy in lifespan of various Buddhas by a doctrine that there are two forms of lifespan accruing to a Buddha, manifest and concealed, where the concealed, true lifespan of all Buddhas is limitless.[2346] The docetistic interpretation of these facts is explicitly stated.[2347] The text also goes on to solve the problem of the apparent short lifespan of the Buddha in a different way: Ānanda once wondered why the Buddha is so short-lived when other Buddhas of the past were so long-lived, and whether, therefore, he really has the power to save his followers; the Buddha demonstrated the *buddhâvataṃsaka* miracle, and then asserts that he has the power to save countless beings in even a single day of being present in the world, let alone "a hundred" years. Even this explanation, however, comes back around to the doctrine of the Buddha's immortality: "Thus you should know that the lifespan of all Buddhas is limitless" (以是故知諸佛壽命皆悉無量).[2348]

[2344] Lamotte, *Marche* 271

[2345] See also, for example: 諸佛壽命實皆無量。爲度人故現有長短; T1509.312a28-b04; 佛壽命無量, a doctrine cited in passing in a dispute about the possibility of really acquiring the merit of the Buddhas of the three times, T1509.302b14; scripture cited to the effect that limitless life can be attained by the cultivation of *prajñāpāramitā,* T1509.311c18-19.

[2346]諸佛壽命光明各有二種。一者隱藏。二者顯現。一者真實。二者爲眾生故隱藏。真實者無量顯現。爲眾生者有限有量。實佛壽不應短。所以者何 . . . T1509.311c25-28. Guang mentions this extended passage, 122, without giving any reference to a specific MPPŚ locus.

[2347]以是故知諸佛壽命實皆無量。爲度人故現有長短; T1509.312a29-b01.

[2348] T1509.312b04-16; a variant on this same theme, with verse description of the miracle, at T1509.124b16-125a02-04, where, however, the Buddha's lifespan is said to be eighty years, and no explicit assertion of immortality is given.

We find these notions scattered in other works also. Saṃghadeva's translations, for example, also contain references to the actual immortality of the Buddha. In one passage, the text has the Buddha tell Gautamī that he is indeed immortal.[2349] We also find this theme in other, somewhat later texts. For example, the **Tathāgatapratibimbapratiṣṭhânuśaṃsā-sūtra* 佛說大乘造像功德經 T694,[2350] also asserts that the lifespan of the Buddha is in fact limitless and his apparent life and death in the world is a docetistic show,[2351] and the doctrine of the Buddha's immortality is also found in the *Buddhabhūmisūtraśāstra* and **Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi.*[2352]

These examples could certainly be further multiplied, but these examples, among which are the most significant "lifespan" chapters of the Mahāyāna *sūtra* literature, suffice to show that in texts of this period, the idea is now common that Śākyamuni is in fact immortal. In these texts, moreover, his extreme longevity or immortality is often associated with the immense merit he has earned over aeons of *bodhisattva* practice, and the apparent contradiction between his apparent short lifespan and his real lifespan is explained by direct appeal to docetistic doctrine, as merely so much *upāya.* Most interestingly for our purposes in this study of doctrines of embodiment, however, we also find that the Buddha's extreme longevity or immortality is also

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[2349] 世尊告曰。瞿曇彌。不應向如來作是言。如來延壽無窮。恒護其命; T125.592c13-15. Perhaps in a loose thematic are passages that appear in Saṃghadeva's version of the *Madhyamâgama,* but not in the corresponding MN 97 *Dhānañjāni-sutta,* stating that various benefits will accrue to one who behaves in accordance with *dharma* and *karma,* including that his parents, wives, slaves, and Brahmans and *śrāmaṇera* will wish that he live forever 願令大家 . . . 壽考無窮; T26.457a25-b26. We will examine more examples of longevity and immortality in Saṃghadeva's translations below.

[2350] See Guang 121.

[2351] We will return to other dimensions of this text below; see p. 1089.

[2352] "Appendice" 804, 807, 810.

frequently associated in these same texts with special qualities of his body. We now turn to the examination of these accompanying doctrines of embodiment.

5.1.6 The body *like* adamant

The extreme longevity or immortality of the Buddha is frequently and broadly linked explicitly to the nature of one or more of his embodiments, often in the very same texts we have just examined. In what follows, I will particularly focus on the idea that a Buddha's body is absolutely permanent, that is, a notion of embodiment that matches the doctrine of his immortality. As we will see, this doctrine seems to emerge in two broad phases which may be loosely correlated with the phases we observe in the emergence of ideas about extreme longevity and immortality above. In the first phase, prior to the fourth century, the Buddha's body is said to be "like adamant", but it is not yet said that his body is indeed "of adamant", with possible but uncertain exceptions in the *Aśokâvadāna* and the *Akṣayamatinirdeśa.* In the second phase, which may be correlated with the emergence of the unequivocal immortality of Śākyamuni in the fourth century, we see a shift whereby his body outright is said to be made of adamant.

First, then, in this subsection, we will examine the idea that the Buddha's body is somehow *like* adamant.

The earliest place where a body of the Buddha is spoken of in terms of *vajra* is, in fact, in connection with relics (taking as read my contention that relics a veritable body of the Buddha, as argued above); and the earliest place where such a contention is made about relics, to my knowledge, is not in the textual record, but in the "Inscription of Senavarma".[2353] There, the

[2353] See the opening to §5.1.2 above for cross-references to discussion of this inscription earlier in this dissertation.

text of some kind of "final body" (*āntimaśarīra) as an "mass of *vajra*" (*vajrasaṃghaṇa). We have also seen, in the context of our discussion of the Senavarma inscription above, that the production of the relics at the moment of *parinirvāṇa* is associated with entry into the *vajrôpamasamādhi* as early as Mātṛceta, and that around the same time as we here see the *body* (*kāya*) of the Buddha being described directly as adamantine, we also find a small number of references to relics as adamantine.[2354] This is another respect in which a complex of important ideas about the Buddha's bodies are found in embryo in ideas about relics, and in particular, in this remarkable inscription.

Even aside from its connection with relics, the idea that the Buddha (or Tathāgata) has a body that is "like adamant" (如金剛, 若金剛, 猶金剛 etc.) seems quite old, and occurs in our textual record as soon as we emerge from what I am here calling the "black box" of chronology in our textual record between the Pāli canon and the inception of the Chinese record.[2355] Thus, the notion of a body at least somehow "like adamant" is already attested in numerous earlier contexts, e.g. in the works of Lokakṣema,[2356] Zhi Qian,[2357] and Dharmarakṣa.[2358]

[2354] See n. 1210.

[2355] See p. 437.

[2356] E.g. in the *Lokânuvartanā-sūtra,* T807.752a08; the *Druma* T624.349c13-15, 350b14-17; **Ajātaśatrukaukṛtyavinodana-sūtra,* T626.398c26-28.

The **Ajātaśatru* passage in particular is remarkable for the way it plays on the simile of adamant very extensively. To paraphrase the difficult Chinese loosely, Mañjuśrī is describing the absolute after the conceit of a "wheel [of Dharma] that does not roll back" (**avaivartikacakra,* 阿惟越致輪), which does not "turn" (i.e. make or allow to function, *vṛt;* a paradoxical play on the idea of "turning" the *dharmacakra;* in Fatian, we are told explicitly that it is in not making anything "turn" that we speak of "turn the *dharmacakra*", or that it is called "the turning *dharmacakra*",其輪無轉相是名轉法輪) any of the five *skandhas*; in fact, in it, all *dharmas* do not "turn" because "in **dharmatā*/the **dharmakāya* [?] no *dharmas* 'turn'" (法身無法轉). This wheel reaches everywhere, in a manner that is likened to the fact that space pervades all things (譬若如空無所不入). This is then likened in turn to the way *vajra* (a needle of *vajra,* 金剛句 in Fatian) penetrates and threads together (鑽穿) all the various gems; in the same manner, this 'wheel' penetrates and threads together all *dharmas,* just like space, and for this reason is called "*dharma*[-*tā*?]." This is the background for the assertion that concerns us most centrally here: "**Sarvadharmas/* the **dharmadhātu* is/are like [the] *vajra* [in this analogy], comprising the principle that, like space, [runs as a common thread through] the confused variety [of phenomena?]. The Tathāgata is

However, we should be cautious about assuming that these "bodies like adamant" are already the *vajrakāya* as it is more familiar to us from later contexts. It seems in fact that the connotations of these bodies are on the whole quite different. First, it seems that they are associated less with the Buddha than with broader classes of remarkable beings, to which the Buddha probably belongs as the *primus inter pares*. For example, it is sometimes further stated explicitly that it is one of the marks of the *mahāpuruṣa.*[2359] Such bodies are elsewhere said to be

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like [the] *vajra,* running throughout all [like/as] emptiness*;* (法身者若金剛。諸所亂者而空理之。怛薩阿竭者如金剛。悉穿無所有) ; his liberation, like *vajra,* surpasses all unliberated [beings/states?]; [in his?] *nirvāṇa* he sees all self-originated *dharmas*" (其脫如金剛過於諸不脫者。泥洹者見諸自然法), T626.398c11-28. Given that this text is attributed to Lokakṣema and thus very early, it is of course of particular interest to know what is meant by the term *fashen* here; it is unlikely, however, that it refers to *dharmakāya,* given Paul Harrison's evidence from a comprehensive survey of (apparently) all instances of *fashen* in this text that it only ever corresponds to **sarvadharma* or *dharmadhātu* etc. in other versions of the text ("Real Phantom Body" 63-64; however, I cannot see that any of the passage references Harrison gives corresponds to this particular phrase, and perhaps Harrison missed it out in his study). No *dharmakāya* appears in Fatian's version of the text, but rather, it is clearly stated that the "wheel that does not roll back" is the *dharmadhātu*, 不退輪者即法界, 628.440a13-14; it is associated with "the *svabhāva* of all *dharmas*" 諸法自性, T628.440a25, etc. The analogy to *vajra* here hinges closely on the identity of the Tathāgata with the "absolute" and the interpenetration of both into all things, which suggests that somehow the conceit of *vajra* is being associated with the emergent proto-*dharmakāya* I have identified in Chapter 4.3 as preceding *dharmakāya* in name in this stratum of the record. However, it is notable that the precise way the metaphor of *vajra* works here is different again from other instances, in that it seems to hinge on the extreme hardness of *vajra* as a quality that makes it possible for it to "penetrate" anything; and there is no apparent association of either indestructibility or permanence, as would be required for a firm link to the trope of immortality.

[2357] E.g. in his *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa,* T474.523b24-27: 我言。居士。佛身小中風當用牛湩。故我到此。維摩詰言。止止。唯阿難。莫作是語。如來身者金剛之數。眾惡已斷諸善普會。當有何病; *tam enam aham etad avocam: bhagavato gṛhapate kāyasya kaścid evâbādhaḥ/ tatra ca kṣīreṇa kṛtyam, tat paryeṣāmi/ sa mām evam āha: alaṃ bhadantānanda mā evam vocaḥ/ vajrasaṃhatano hi bhadantānanda tathāgatakāyaḥ sarvâkuśalavāsanāprahīṇaḥ sarvamahaujaskakuśaladharmasamanvāgataḥ/ kutas tasya vhādhiḥ kuta upadravaḥ,* Study Group, *Vim* 33; see Lamotte §3.43. Compare to *vajrasaṃhatano* the **vajrasaṃghana*[*tas*] (on von Hinüber's Skt. reconstruction) of the Senavarma Inscription, above n. 1186, n. 1195, n 1202.

[2358] E.g. 如來身者金剛之數 in his 力士移山經 T135.859a26-27; **Upāyakakauśalyajñānôttara-bodhisattva-paripṛcchā-sūtra,* T345.164a13-16; 如來之身金剛德體 etc., **Candraprabhakumāra-sūtra* 佛說月光童子經 T534.816a29-b10.

[2359] E.g. in Zhi Qian's 梵摩渝經 **Brahmāyursūtra*?, T76.883c27.

available not only to the Buddha alone, but also to *bodhisattvas*.[2360] There is even a whole world where all beings have such bodies.[2361]

Further, it seems that, however much we might assume that adamant is a byword for permanence, the adamantine body in these texts is associated, rather than with immortality, with other qualities: we have already seen that in the *Lokânuvartanā-sūtra* and the *Fenbie gongde lun* it is associated with purity;[2362] and it is also associated on occasion with strength.[2363] In Zhi Qian's *Vim* it is associated with freedom from sickness and "bad *dharmas*", which we might consider related to immortality and indestructibility, but the connection is certainly not made explicit. The adamantine body has roughly the same associations, without the specific implication that he is immune from sickness being drawn, in Dharmarakṣa's **Candraprabhakumāra-sūtra*.[2364] In Dharmarakṣa's **Upāyakakauśalyajñānôttara-bodhisattva-paripṛcchā-sūtra*, it is used rather to convey the idea that he is merely impervious to physical harm (in a context rich with docetistic associations).[2365] In Dharmarakṣa's *Li shi yi shan jing,* the idea that the Buddha's body is adamantine is even coupled to precisely the idea that he is *not*

[2360] E.g. Dharmarakṣa's *Akṣayamatinirdeśa,* T403.589b03-05.

[2361] E.g. Dharmarakṣa's *Mukākumāra-sūtra* T401.532b08-22.

[2362] See above p. 668 and n. 1373, n. 1391.

[2363] E.g. 身力如金剛/禪思不可動 in Dharmarakṣa's 普曜經, T186.511b17; see also the quote from T135 above n. 2358.

[2364] 如來之身金剛德體。眾惡盡滅萬善積著, T534.816b07-08.

[2365] The context is the famous parable of the *bodhisattva* killing a man on board a boat to save the lives of five hundred merchants he knew were destined to become Buddhas; this past is supposedly betrayed by the Buddha's body being pierced in various ways in the present life, but in fact, the text tells us, his body is really adamantine; T345.163c11-p164b06.

permanent; he is about to enter *parinirvāṇa* despite the fact that his body is adamantine, and this proves that the greatest power of all is impermanence.[2366]

In these texts, then, there is as yet no clear association between the notion of the adamantine body of the Buddha and any particular conception of his lifespan. We should also note, however, that the body of the Buddha is said to be like adamant in some of the texts we examined above for the idea that cosmically remote Buddhas are either extremely long-lived or immortal, and indeed, there seems to be some sign of a pattern whereby the predication of bodies like adamant seems on the whole to be found more often in texts that also include overt statements that Buddhas are in fact exempt from *parinirvāṇa.* The texts that comprise this pattern are *Druma,* the *Sarvapuṇyasamuccayasamādhi*, and the *Bhadrakalpita.* In some cases here, also, however, the association between the adamantine body and immortality does not yet seem to be very strong: in *Druma* it comes closest, in associating the claim that the body is adamantine with the claim that the Tathāgata[2367] is unarisen and has no extinction because he "does not come and go" etc.[2368] *Sarvapuṇyasamuccayasamādhi* emphasises rather strength.[2369] However, the *Bhadrakalpita* does emphasise that the body is adamantine and therefore "indestructible".[2370]

[2366] 無常之力計爲最勝多所消伏。所以者何。如來身者金剛之數。無常勝我當歸壞敗。吾今夜半當於力士所生之地而取滅度, etc. T135.859a25-27.

[2367] Which term is translated in this text (or context?) 法如怛薩, which looks something like **dharmatâgata, *dharmatathatâgata,* "[the one] gone to the Thusness of *dharmas*". See Makransky, *Buddhahood Embodied* 373 n. 9 for an independent suggestion of the possibility of such a reading of *tathāgata* (in the context of the Thusness chapter of *Aṣṭa*).

[2368] 亦無所從來。無所從去 . . . . 其德若大山。身者若金剛, T624.349c10-14.

[2369] 得堅強力身如鉤鎖行如金剛, T381.986c12.

[2370] 身無能壞堅如金剛, T425.26c03-04.

It is further noticeable, however, that in all these instances of the notion that various bodies of various beings are "*like* adamant", the proposition is never put that they have an "adamant body" *per se.*[2371] In the case of the Chinese record, this means that *jin'gangshen* (金剛身 = **vajrakāya*) never, to my knowledge, appears as a compound.[2372]

One possible exception to the pattern I am claiming here may be found in the *Aśokâvadāna,* which is thought on the whole to have been written sometime in the second century, before the *terminus ante quem* of Faqin's (法欽) translation.[2373] At one place in the text, Aśoka says that he must go personally to see Upagupta (who is described elsewhere in the text as "a Buddha without the marks"[2374]), because Upagupta is an excellent being, and it would be insulting for Aśoka to summon him, as a minister has suggested. In describing Upagupta's excellence, The Sanskrit has Aśoka say, in part: "I think that Upagupta's body is made of *vajra*,/ harder than a rock."[2375] However, the Chinese of Faqin does not match this assertion in the Sanskrit text, but rather has Aśoka declare, "[It is I who] must go to see him, because I have not yet attained to the *mind* of *vajra;* how, then, can I force him into submission [to me], [he] who is a man like the Buddha?"[2376] There is no mention of a "body made of adamant" in the Saṃghavarman translation of the early sixth century, either, which rather says that Upagupta has a *mind* made

[2371] On the distinction I am using here between the translation terms "body like adamant" and "adamant body", see above, n. 2237.

[2372] Once more, I remind my reader here of the caveats laid out in the introduction to this section (at p. 1034) about the limits of the searches upon which I rely for generalisations such as this one. It is still possible that further exceptions exist to the patterns I identify here.

[2373] Strong, *Legend* 170; Mukhopadhyaya lx.

[2374] Strong, *Legend* 174.

[2375] *manye vajramayaṃ tasya dehaṃ śailôpamādhikaṃ;* Strong 240, Mukhopadhyaya 77.

[2376] My emphasis. 彼應往見。何以故我今未得金剛心故。云何屈彼如佛之人, T2042.102c03-04; cf. Przyluski 247.

of adamant (其心金剛造).[2377] Whatever may be the reasons for this variation (one of many, as Mukhupadhyaya's notes clearly show) between the various versions of the text, then, it is clear that this passage cannot serve as evidence for the presence of the notion of a body *of* adamant, as opposed to a body *like* adamant, this early in the record; it seems equally possible that this line found its way into the Sanskrit of the text at a later date.

We might also note, however, that elsewhere in Faqin's Chinese version of the same text, in the chapter on the decline of the Dharma, there is a verse which states that "even a body and mind of adamant (金剛之身心) is nonetheless heir to destruction; how, then, could frail bodies and minds escape it?"[2378] However, it is not clear from context to whom the text attributes this adamant body and mind, and given that there is no extant Sanskrit for this chapter,[2379] and also apparently no parallel to this chapter in Saṃghavarman,[2380] there is no further evidence we can examine upon whose basis to substantiate a firmer reading of the passage. For these reasons, it seems that this passage, too, can scarcely be regarded as a firm exception to the pattern I am identifying here.

Another possible exception to this pattern is found in the *Akṣayamatinirdeśa*, of which Dharmarakṣa's translation was completed in 308 C.E.[2381] In part of the text treating the 34th "imperishable", it is stated that the ordinary body "originates from misunderstanding" etc., and is in fact merely a product of causes and conditions in which there is no self. The *bodhisattva*

[2377] 處世同如來/ 名優波笈多/ 若不受其教/ 其心金剛造, T2043.135c15-16.

[2378] 金剛之身心/ 猶尚有壞敗/ 況危脆身心/ 而當不破壞, T2042.127b20-23; cf. Przyluski 406.

[2379] Strong, *Legend* 170.

[2380] Przyluski 399 n. 1.

[2381] Braarvig II, xli.

practises mindfulness of the true nature of the body, and resolves, "Even though there is no activity of a self in this body, I will wake up completely to the core by means of this body without a core. What is that core? The body of the Tathāgatas. I will attain that body of the Tathāgatas, the body of [all] moments of existence, the adamant body, the uncrushable body, the firm body, the body distinct from the threefold world."[2382] As we see, Braarvig's Sanskrit reconstruction here contains the compound *vajrakāya,*[2383] and this is certainly entirely reasonable from Tib. *rdo rje'i sku.*[2384] If this compound dated back as far as the earliest known Chinese versions of the *sūtra,* this passage would comprise an important exception to my claim that the compound is not observed before c. 400.

However, in Dharmarakṣa's version of the text, we find, corresponding to this passage with its *rdo rje'i sku/*vajrakāya,* only "the sacred body of the Buddha, the limitless *dharmakāya* that is *like* adamant and indestructible" (佛聖體無極法身猶如金剛不可破壞). Given the otherwise extremely widespread pattern we have just observed, where the idea of bodies "*like* adamant" is very widespread before c. 400, but the idea of a body "*of* adamant" (i.e. an "adamant body", *jin'gangshen*) is never otherwise attested, it seems safest to assume that the Dharmarakṣa

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[2382] Tib. *bdag gis de bzhin gshegs pa'i sku, chos kyi sku, rdo rje'i sku, mi shigs pa'i sku, brtan pa'i sku, khams gsum thams cad las khyad par du 'phags pa'i sku de sgrub par bya'o;* Braarvig reconstructs Skt. *ahaṃ taṃ tathāgatakāyaṃ dharmakāyaṃ vajrakāyam abhedyakāyaṃ dṛḍhakāyaṃ sarvatraidhātuviśiṣṭakāyaṃ pratipatsye;* Braarvig I, 126; II, 483-485, corresponding to T403.606b04-08 in Dharmarakṣa's translation.

[2383] Braarvig comments appositely on his methods and the likely reliability of his Sanskrit reconstructions, II, cxxxi.

[2384] Braarvig cites the *Ṭīkā* at this point: *rdo rje'i sku zhes bya ba nyon mongs pa dang shes bya'i sgrib pa 'joms par bstan te, rdo rje bzhin du bdag med pa'i mtshan nyid kyi sku des nyon mongs pa dang shes bya'i sgrib pa spong bar byed pa'i phyir ro*; "By '*vajrakāya*' is taught the destruction of the obstructions of defilement and of the object of knowledge (*kleśa-jñeya-āvaraṇa*), because of the abandonment of obstructions of defilement and of the object of knowledge [effected] by this adamant body, which is characterised by the utter absence of all 'self' (*ātman*);" II, 485 n. 1. The *Ṭīkā* is almost entirely known only from an anonymous Tibetan translation, II, cxvii n. 1; it is written from an explicitly Yogācāra standpoint, as this quotation also suggests, and is probably by "Sthiramati or some Yogācāra adherent later than him", thus dating it to at least the sixth century; cxxix.

translation here reflects an earlier stage in the composition of the text, wherein the idea of a *vajrakāya* stated in such bald terms had not yet found a place, and that the Tibetan translated by Braarvig represents a later version of the text, rather than to assume that expression in terms of a "body *like* adamant" is merely an artefact of Dharmarakṣa's translation practice.

I have been unable, then, to find any firm examples of the attribution of a body *of* adamant in any texts prior to 400 C.E. Once we arrive at the watershed that apparently falls in the Chinese record of these ideas around that date, however, the compound *jin'gangshen,* which I take as indicative of such a conceptual shift, is suddenly easy to find in a number of contexts.

5.1.7 The entry of the body *of* adamant proper (*vajrakāya*) into the Chinese record c. 400 C.E.

In texts translated into Chinese one or two decades either side of 400 C.E., we suddenly see the explosive advent of a new twist on the idea of a body like adamant. Suddenly, a startlingly broad range of texts begin to say simply that the Buddha's body is *of* adamant. It seems to me that this shift is very likely related to the sudden burgeoning of the idea that all Buddhas, including Śākyamuni, are actually immortal; we also see in this period the first signs associations I know of between the adamantine nature of the Buddha's body and his lifespan (where, as we have just seen, the trope of the adamantine body has a variety of other uses and meanings in the earlier period).

I will also explore other ideas to which I expect this development is thematically connected in the conclusion to this section of this chapter, and also later in this dissertation.

This new material is particular striking because of its wide scope, but in order to convey an accurate idea of the range of attestations of this new idea, I must risk erring on the side of

inclusiveness. In what follows, I will explore the Mahāyāna MNPS on this topic in some detail, and then summarise ideas from a relatively large number of texts with ever-increasing brevity.

In the Mahāyāna *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra,*[2385] as I mentioned above, Kasyapa's question about the apparent contradiction between the Buddha's assertion that he is in truth immortal and the decrepit, moribund body his worshippers see before them motivates the introduction of an overtly docetistic explanation. This explanation is, moreover, couched in terms of a doctrine of bodies. "The Tathāgata's body is a transformed body (變化身, prob. **nairmāṇikakāya*) and not one supported by various kinds of food."[2386]

We have also already noted that in the same text, extremely long lifespan is closely associated with possession of the "adamant body" (*jin'gangshen* 金剛身, **vajrakāya*).[2387] We can now examine this link in a little more detail. We take up the tale at the end of Chapter Four, "On Long Life", which we began examining above.[2388] That chapter ends with a coda on the links between these doctrines of extreme longevity and the problematic of embodiment.

First, the Buddha asserts that *nirvāṇa* is "the *dharmatā* of the Buddha (佛法性)."[2389] Kasyapa then asks about this *dharmatā* (Ch. *faxing* 法性) in somewhat confusing terms:

2385 In this section, as above, I will usually be using the unpaginated translation of Yamamoto Kōshō, unless otherwise noted; see n. 2323.

2386 如來此身是變化身非雜食身; T375.621c02.

2387 The problem of longevity was associated with the *vajrakāya* as soon as it was introduced to the text, as we saw above (see n. 2325).

2388 See p.1066 ff.

2389 涅槃義者。即是諸佛之法性也; T375.622a28-29. The lead-up to this assertion is somewhat puzzling. The Buddha asserts that he is "constant" (*chang* 常, *nityam*), and that it is as such that the body of the

> "What is meant by 'the *dharmatā* of the Tathāgata? *Dharmatā*" means 'abandoning the body' (法性者即是捨身), [but] abandoning the body means one has nothing/that nothing exists (捨身者名無所有). [But] if one has nothing/if nothing exists, how can a body still exist (身云何存)? [Conversely,] if a body still exists, how can we say that body 'has *dharmatā*'? [Or, again,] if the body 'has *dharmatā*', how can the body still exist? How should I understand this doctrine?"[2390]

It seems that Kasyapa is here rehearsing a common understanding of what it means to "attain" ("get", "have", *you* 有) *dharmatā* – presumably, what is assumed is an equation of *dharmatā* with *śūnyatā* and *śūnyatā* with "nothing", such that realising *dharmatā* entails realising that the thing "of which" one attains the "*dharmatā*" does not, in fact, exist! In so doing, of course, Kasyapa is voicing a doctrine that Buddhist texts regularly list as a dangerous mistake, namely "nihilism" (*apavāda*), and sure enough, the Buddha immediately tells him off for his misunderstanding. Whether or not the question is predicated upon a misunderstanding, however, what is of interest for us here is the way it links the question of the Buddha's *dharmatā* to the problem of his embodiment. When Kasyapa says that *dharmatā* means "giving up the body" *sheshen* 捨身, the text may be playing on the ambiguity of this term; it could also mean, more figuratively, "to give your*self* up", "to abandon your *self*", and may be a reference to the idea of giving up any (false) notions of *ātman*. Similarly, when the next step in the pseudo-syllogism is to say that "if you give up your *shen* (your body, your very self), then you have absolutely nothing", it seems, from the sequence, that it is clearly playing on the ambiguity of the Chinese *wu suo you* 無所有,

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Tathāgata should be known 應當如是知如來身; T375.622a23. He then says, obscurely, that men and women of good family should always affix their minds on "these two words", which Yamamoto understands to mean the two characters of *rulai* 如來 = *tathāgata,* but which may refer to the following proposition, "The Tathāgata is constant" (**nityas tathāgataḥ*?); and that if they can "cultivate" or "practice" (*xiu* 修) these "two words", then they will go where the Buddha himself goes, and "the Tathāgata will be *parinirvāṇa*-ed for them(?); 諸善男子善女人。常當繫心修此二字。佛是常住。迦葉。若有善男子善女人修此二字。當知是人隨我所行至我至處。善男子。若有修習如是二字爲滅相者。當知如來則於其人爲般涅槃; T375.622a23-28.

2390 佛法性者其義云何。世尊。我今欲知法性之義。唯願如來哀愍廣說。夫法性者即是捨身。捨身者名無所有。若無所有身云何存。身若存者云何而言身有法性。身有法性云何得存。我今云何當知是義; T375.622b01-06. I have substantially modified Yamamoto's translation.

which could also mean that "nothing (whatsoever) *exists*".[2391] In other words, for Kasyapa, the realisation of *dharmatā* entails a radically disembodied state in which one does not exist at all.

Now, it is significant, first, that this question is posed immediately in response to the assertion of a doctrine about the *dharmatā* of the Buddha, in which there is no explicit mention of the body at all. This suggests that the notion of *dharmatā* here is already understood against the background of an idea of a *dharma*[*tā*]-*kāya* of the Buddha. And indeed, in a response that explains that the realm of the Buddha's *dharmatā* is somehow analogous to the rarefied meditational heaven of the fourth *dhyāna,* wherein beings are indeed embodied ("*rūpa* is perfected") but there is no concept of *rūpa*, the Buddha, sure enough, makes direct reference to the *dharmakāya*: "You should not say that the body of the Tathāgata is a thing subject to extinction (*miefa* 滅法, **nirodha-dharma*) . . . . Such doctrines are not within your ken, and the *dharmakāya* of the Buddhas, and [their] various expedients, are inconceivable."[2392]

The link to the problem of embodiment does not end here, however. Rather, immediately following this coda, the text opens onto Chapter Five, which is dedicated entirely to the "adamant body", and thus provides the second part of the question that launched Chapter Four, namely

> "How can [one] obtain long life
> And an adamant body imperishable?"[2393]

Chapter Five, "On the Adamant Body" (金剛身品), opens with the Buddha declaring to Kasyapa:

[2391] If this reading is correct, it is hard to imagine that this play on Chinese meanings could reflect an Indic original by translation.

[2392] My translation, since I found Yamamoto unserviceable here: 不應說言如來身者是滅法也, T375.622b11-12; 如是之義亦非汝等之所知。及諸佛法身種種方便不可思議, T375.622b15-16.

[2393] 云何得長壽/金剛不壞身; T375.619b22; translation modified.

> "O good man! The body of the Tathāgata is an eternal body, an indestructible body, an adamant body; it is not a body sustained by various kinds of food. That is to say, it is the Dharma Body."[2394]

Kasyapa, however, says he sees no such body before him, but rather the body that epitomises precisely the crisis around which the entire situation of the *sūtra* revolves – the Buddha's vulnerability and imminent death: "[We] see only an impermanent body, 'destructible, [composed of] dust and earth, sustained by various kinds of food,' and so on."[2395] The Buddha replies,

> "Do not say that the body of the Tathāgata is not strong, can easily be broken, and is the same as that of common mortals. O good man! Know that the body of the Tathāgata is strong and firm, and cannot be destroyed even over countless billions of *kalpas*. It is neither the body of man or of god; it is not a body susceptible to fear; nor is it a body sustained by various kinds of food . . ."[2396]

and so on, through a long paean to the marvellous qualities of the *dharmakāya* in numerous respects. Kasyapa, professing that he will "henceforth regard the Tathāgata's body as the eternal *dharmakāya,* the body of peace and bliss (安樂之身) . . . . Yes, indeed, the Tathāgata's Dharma-Body is adamant and indestructible",[2397] asks how it could be so, and the discourse modulates from the language of *dharmakāya* to speaking in terms of the "adamant body" (金剛身). "This adamant body can be perfected [only] by keeping and upholding the true

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[2394] 如來身者是常住身。不可壞身金剛之身。非雜食身即是法身; T375.622c14-16. Translation modified.

[2395] 唯見無常破壞塵土雜食等身; T375.622c17-18; translation modified. Note the partial resonances of parts of the old description of the ordinary given physical body e.g. from DN 2: 無常 *anniccu,* 破壞 *chādanaparimaddanabhedanaviddhaṃsana,* 塵土 *cātummahābhūtiko,* 雜食 *odanakummāsūpacayo,* etc. Doubtless the 等 "and so forth" is to be read as indicating that what is meant is this entire pericope.

[2396] 汝今莫謂如來之身不堅可壞如凡夫身。善男子。汝今當知。如來之身無量億劫堅牢難壞。非人天身非恐怖身非雜食身; T375.622c19-21; translation modified.

[2397] 我從今日常當思惟如來之身是常法身安樂之身 . . . . 唯然世尊。如來法身金剛不壞; T375.623b05-08.

Dharma."[2398] This trope of permanent adamant is echoed in a novel way a little later when Kasyapa is moved to exclaim, " The eternal body of the Tathāgata is as if graven in stone!"[2399]

We thus see, in these chapters of the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra,* that the declaration of the extreme longevity of the Buddha is closely linked to a particular understanding of his embodiments. The embodiment in which he is apparently about to "enter *parinirvāṇa*", that is, to die physically, is merely a docetistic show, an *upāya*. This embodiment, let us note, is identified, by the quotation of the old pericope about the fallible physical body, with notions about ordinary given physical embodiment as old as Buddhism itself. The Buddha's *true* embodiment, conversely, is the *dharmakāya,* which the text associates with the realisation of *dharmatā,* and also with "keeping and upholding the true Dharma". This *dharmakāya* is further spoken of interchangeably as an "adamant body" (**vajrakāya*);[2400] it is utterly indestructible, and it is virtue of its possession that the Tathāgatas are virtually immortal.

This link between extreme longevity or immortality and embodiment is also found in other texts. In the *Golden Light Sūtra,* the doctrine of the Buddha's infinite lifespan is linked to a denial of the reality of relics (*dhātu*), which are shown to be a mere expedient. There can be no relic where there is no real bone or blood,[2401] but the body of the Tathāgata is not of such a nature:

> "His body that is as hard as the thunderbolt manifests his transformed body . . . . the body of the Law (*dharmakāya*) is the one fully enlightened; the sphere of the Law

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[2398] 以能護持正法因緣故得成就是金剛身; T375.623b09-10; my translation.

[2399] 如來常身猶如畫石; T375.624 a10-11, translation modified.

[2400] Guang Xing mentions the concept of the "diamond [=adamant] body", 122, but neither here nor anywhere else does he really treat this idea as a significant concept of embodiment in his own right – a fact which probably reflects his excessive focus on the *trikāya* doctrine and a teleological understanding of its emergence and place in Buddhist doctrinal history.

[2401] *anasthirudhire kāye kuto dhātur bhaviṣyati*; Emmerick 6-7, Nobel 18.

> (*dharmadhātu*) is the Tathāgata. Such is the Lord's body; such the exposition of the Law."[2402]

In closing, the chapter draws this link between the eternity of the Buddha's lifespan and the nature of his embodiment more tightly still: "The Buddha does not enter complete Nirvāṇa (and) the Law does not disappear . . . . The Tathāgata has an eternal body."[2403]

The translation of the *Ekottarâgama* (T125) attributed in the Chinese canon to Gautama Saṃghadeva (fl. 383-398) also proclaims that despite the brevity of the life of Śākyamuni, the *dharma* will endure, even after the passing of his fleshly body,[2404] and this good news is related to the indestructibility of the *dharmakāya*. In a further passage, the same text adds has the Buddha proclaim that his life is "extremely long" precisely because it is only his "fleshly body" that enters *nirvāṇa*, while the *dharmakāya* survives.[2405] In another passage, this same *Ekottarâgama* text even explicitly links the problem of longevity for the Buddha, the need for beings to have a field of merit to whom to direct their offerings, and the durability of the Buddha's body:

> "The body of the Tathāgata is akin to adamant (金剛之數).[2406] It is my will that this body be ground up [into grains as small] as it were mustard seeds, and spread

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2402 *vajrasaṃhananakāyo nirmitaṃ kāyaṃ darśayet/ . . . . dharmakāyo hi saṃbuddho dharmadhātus tathāgataḥ/ īdṛśo bhagavatkāya īdṛśī dharmadeśanā;* Emmerick 7-8, Nobel 18. Note the association of the *dharmakāya* with the *dharmadeśanā*.

2403 *na buddhaḥ parinirvāti na dharmaḥy parihīyate/ . . . . nityakāyas tathāgataḥ;* Emmerick 8, Nobel 19.

2404 釋師出世壽極短/ 肉體雖逝法身在, T125.549c14; . . . . . 如來法身不敗壞/ 永存於世不斷絕 T125.550a01-02.

2405 我釋迦文佛壽命極長。所以然者。肉身雖取滅度。法身存在, T125.787b27-28. These *Ekottara* passages cited in Demiéville, 176.

2406 金剛之數 might also be translated clumsily "is of the category of adamant"; 數 *shǔ* here has the sense of "count as", "be counted among", 算在數內 (s.v. *Hanyu dacidian*).

> throughout the worlds (ages), in order that in future times, believing donors will still be able to make offerings even without seeing the bodily form of the Tathāgata."[2407]

A tiny text called the 施食獲五福報經 T132b, which on the basis of its colophon belongs to the Eastern Jin (317-420),[2408] lists immortality along with the major and minor marks, the ten powers etc. as characteristics of the *dharmakāya*.[2409]

Guṇabhadra's 央掘魔羅經 T120 has the Buddha tell Mañjuśrī that he has a body free of old age, birth-and-death, sickness and so forth, as a result of the countless meritorious practices he has engaged in through *kalpa* after *kalpa* of previous lives; among the ways this body is described, it is said to be "deathless" (不死身).[2410]

Buddhabhadra's *Avataṃsaka* explains that the Buddha's body *and* life-force are impervious to all manner of hyperbolic threats (一切佛身。舉世栽横所不能壞。諸佛命根。世間諸毒所不能害): e.g. even if all the sentient beings in the entire cosmos were to rain *vajra* down upon his body, the Buddha would be utterly fearless, and the threat would "not raise even a single hair"

[2407] 如來身者金剛之數。意欲碎此身如芥子許。流布世間。使將來之世。信樂檀越不見如來形像者。取供養之因 (T125.751a11-14, cited in Demiéville 176).

[2408] *Hôbôgirin* also has no more information than this on the date of the text, 27.

[2409] 法身現相壽命無窮相好分明。三十二相致十種力以成佛道, T132b.855b18-19.

[2410] 我於無量阿僧祇劫。爲護法故捨恒河沙身。一一身若傷若打若壞故。生此不壞無爲之身。我於無量阿僧祇劫眾多住處。精進捨身恒河沙數。一一身住無量劫精進苦行故。生不老身。我於無量阿僧祇劫。生疾疫劫爲作良藥。一一身趣恒河沙劫故生無病身。我於無量阿僧祇。劫恒河沙生。爲斷無量眾生飢[1]餓之病。施大乘味故。生不死身 . . . ; T120.536a01-08.

on him.[2411] Elsewhere in the text, a perfect indestructible body like adamant and infinite life (具足成就不死命根) are listed together as gifts of those born into the clan of the Buddha.[2412]

The **Mahāprajñāpāramitā-śāstra* also explains that the body of the Buddha is supreme among *rūpas,* and therefore his longevity must also be supreme among all beings.[2413] We have also already had occasion earlier in this dissertation to note that in the same period, Kumārajīva, the translator of MPPŚ, is supposed to have commented, in explicating a passage from the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa,* that there are three kinds of *dharmakāya,* and one of them is the *vajrakāya.*[2414]

These examples could easily be multiplied still further. In brief: the attribution of an adamant body to the Buddha is found in a verse uttered by a nameless monk in a *Dīrghâgama* account of the Tathāgata's *parinirvāṇa.*[2415] It is in verses similarly found in Faxian's version of the

[2411] T278.597c26-598a08.

[2412] T278.704b03-08. Note also that the theme of longevity receives an interesting expression in this text when it is listed (in typically prolix, repetitive fashion) among the benefits vouchsafed sentient beings by the supererogatory generosity of *bodhisattvas* (who give various limbs of their body upon request), 278.513a24-b7; in a similar later passage, *bodhisattvas* transfer their merit to sentient beings in order to obtain for them various advantages, including that they "go to the paths of undying" 趣不死道, T278.518b04-05.

[2413] 復次如一切色中佛身第一。一切心中佛心第一。以是故一切壽命中佛壽亦應第一 (T1509.312a10-12, cited in la Vallée Poussin, "Appendice", 806)

[2414] See n. 2153.

[2415] 是身如泡沫/危脆誰當樂/佛得金剛身/猶爲無常壞/諸佛金剛體/皆亦歸無常/速滅如少雪/其餘復何]冀, T1.27b11-14, translated by Buddhayaśas and Zhu Fonian, who were active c. 408-412, *Hôbôgirin* 238; naturally enough, nothing corresponding to this verse occurs in the Pāli versions of the text. In another tangentially related passage, in a text corresponding to DN 26 *Cakkavattisīhanāda-sutta,* this same *Dīrghâgama* translation has the Buddha promise monks long life as one of the fruits of practice leading to the attainment of the five superpowers: 云何比丘壽命延長。如是比丘修習欲定。精勤不懈。滅行成就。以修神足。修精進定・意定・思惟定。精勤不懈。滅行成就。以修神足。是爲壽命延長, T1.42a27-b01.

Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra,[2416] and in Guṇabhadra's *Saṃyuktâgama.*[2417] It is in Kumārajīva's *Lotus Sutra.*[2418] It is in a text included in the *Mahāratnakuṭa* translated by Buddhaśanta.[2419] It was even to find its way into the context of the Prajñāpāramitā literature, e.g. in Kumārajīva's *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā.*[2420] In addition to these instances, we must also recall, as we have seen, that the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra,* also translated around this time, has an entire chapter called "The Body of Adamant" (*jin'gangshen* 金剛身). Similarly, it is not until the much later version of the *Golden Light Sūtra* by Yijing 義淨 (635-713) that the Buddha's body has become an adamant body;[2421] no such notion is mentioned in earlier translations[2422] by Dharmarakṣa or the mixed translation by various hands.[2423]

[2416] 如來天人尊/金剛身堅固/猶不免無常/而況於餘人, T7.205b07-08; Faxian returned from his pilgrimage to India to take up his translation work in 417.

[2417] 汝見金剛身/我師無疇匹 etc.; T99.167b03-05; Guṇabhadra arrived in Canton in 435, *Hôbôgirin* 252.

[2418] 應以執金剛身得度者。即現執金剛身而爲說法; T262.57b17-19.

[2419] 大乘十法會, *sūtra* no. 9 in the collection: 佛告目連。令到耆婆大醫王所。問服藥法。善男子。此亦是我憐愍後世故作是說。有諸聲聞假藥將身。彼當憶我佛金剛身猶尚服藥。何況我等及其餘者; T310.155b12-15. Buddhaśanta was active in 525-539 in Luoyang and Ye, *Hôbôgirin* 238.

[2420] 入金剛三昧中。碎金剛身作末舍利, T223.293b06-10; note the way the idea of "smashing [the *vajrakāya*] to smithereens" is expressed as "smashing it into tiny relics" (舍利, *śarīra;* note the connection to conceptions of relics studied by Skilling, already cited above n. 1210, 1224, 1225)! That *vajrakāya* was a permanent fixture in this context once it made its way in is evidenced by the fact that the same notion is also found in Xuanzang's *Mahāprajñāpāramitā-sūtra,* T220.165c03, 708c30.

[2421] 獲此最勝金剛身; T665.444c16; 世尊金剛體/權現於化身; T665.406c09.

[2422] I.e. T663 and 664 respectively.

[2423] Although it is a later text, it also seems worth raising as an example of this same phenomenon the **Tathāgatapratibimbapratiṣṭhânuśaṃsā-sūtra* 佛說大乘造像功德經, T694 (Guang draws out attention to this text, *Concept of the Buddha* 121), which we discussed briefly above. This text centres on the merits that accrue from making Buddha images (including long life), contains a passage in which someone asks why, if the Buddha had accumulated immense merit in past lifetimes, he had such a short lifespan (云何壽命而有限) and suffered other misfortunes and indignities; T694.794c28-795a15, partially quoted in Guang 121. In his reply, the Buddha not only asserts that his lifespan is in fact limitless, but explicitly links this immortality to his special embodiment. The Buddha states that in virtue of his countless meritorious acts, he actually acquired long ago a body as hard and indestructible as adamant (堅如金剛) (regrettably, just as he fails to consider the significance of the theme of *jin'gang/vajra* in relation to MNPS,

In light of this consistent association between the docetistically explained actual immortality of the Buddha (despite his apparent frailty and short-livedness) and a *dharmakāya* frequently referred to as a **vajrakāya* or " adamant body", it seems significant that the idea of an "adamant body" is also found inserted for the first time in this same period into a key context where it was formerly absent – the *Sukhāvatīvyūha-sūtras.* As we noted above, these texts were a key context for the development of the idea of extreme longevity or immortality for cosmically remote Buddhas. Vow 26 in the "Saṃghavarman" version of the "long" *sūtra*, which as we saw above is generally thought to date to the early fifth century,[2424] states that *bodhisattvas* in Amitābha's land will have "the adamant body of Narayana".[2425] As Gómez notes,[2426] however, some of the vows of Amitābha known as the later "standard" list are missing from the Zhi Qian and "Lokakṣema" versions of the text. These include this vow, and in fact, no idea of a *vajra*[-like] body is to be found anywhere in the translation of either Zhi Qian or Lokakṣema. It thus seems most likely that this vow entered the text at the stage in the development of Buddhist ideas when the association between extreme longevity or immortality and the adamant body was drawing tighter, a phase which also seems to be attested by the other materials we have

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for which see n. 2400, Guang fails to notice the association with *jin'gang/vajra* here at all), even though he had not yet exhausted his delusion and was still partially mired in *saṃsāra;* 以斯福故雖在生死未盡諸惑。然所受身堅如金剛不可損壞; T694.795a19-20. Further, the real body of all Buddhas is the eternal *dharmakāya,* and that all the events associated with his life in the world (including the distribution of relics and the erection of *stūpas*) were merely docetistic show; 諸佛如來常身法身。爲度眾生故現斯事非爲實也。傷足患背乞乳服藥。乃至涅槃。以其舍利分布起塔。皆是如來方便善巧。令諸眾生見如是相; T694.795b08-11. When beings cut themselves off from evil-doing and cultivate good deeds, they learn of this eternal *dharmakāya,* to which accrue limitless lifespan and pure Buddha-lands; 常身法身壽命無限國土清淨; T694.795b14.

2424 See above n. 2275.

2425 See e.g. Gómez 169, translating: 設我得佛。國中菩薩不得金剛那羅延身者。不取正; T360.268b23-24.

2426 Gómez 129.

examined in this section; and the intrusion of this notion into the *Sukhāvatīvyūha* corpus, where it was previously absent, at precisely this period is therefore a particularly telling indication that this development dates to exactly this period.

This concludes my survey of examples of texts in which this new idea is attested, which as we have seen cover a remarkable range. I have anticipated the question of dates to some extent above, particularly in discussion of the first evidence of **vajrakāya* as a compound,[2427] but the scattered nature of those comments runs the risk of obscuring how widespread the sudden advent of these ideas in the Chinese record really is, and I have also avoided entering into questions of dating in other sections in order to avoid derailing already complex discussion with further detail. Taken as a whole, the range of texts in which these new ideas are attested in a relatively short period of time is very extensive. To summarise:

Our extant versions of the *Lotus Sūtra* from the period under study here are by Dharmarakṣa (T263), which we saw above is the sole standout exception to the chronological pattern we are observing here, and to which I will return momentarily; and Kumārajīva (T262), translated in 406.[2428] The Mahāyāna *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra* is known in three versions in Chinese, all of which date to roughly the same period: T374 is by Dharmakṣema, who worked in Guzang between 414 and 421;[2429] T375 is by Huiyan 慧嚴 (363-443), Xie Lingyun (385-433) etc., and is a work of the Liu Song period (which began in 420); T376 is by Faxian and Buddhabhadra, and dates to approx.

[2427] See above n. 2415, 2416, 2417, 2419 and 2420.

[2428] T264, by Jñānagupta and Dharmagupta, is too late to be of significant interest for the questions under examination here.

[2429] *Hôbôgirin* 243. In 421, he seems to have returned to Khotan for an unspecified period, after which he came again to Guzang; he died in 433, and it is unclear from the *Hôbôgirin* entry how much translating work he did from 421-433. We need not get that specific for our purposes here, however. See also the summary of his biography from *Gaoseng zhuan* given in Braarvig II, xxxiv.

416-418. The *Śūraṃgamasamādhi-sūtra* is supposed to have been translated six times before Kumārajīva, including in 186 by Lokakṣema, but that translation is not extant;[2430] our earliest knowledge of the text as a whole is limited to the version by Kumārajīva made between 402 and 409 (佛說首楞嚴三昧經, T642).[2431] The *Golden Light Sūtra* cannot reasonably be traced back with any certainty much earlier than Dharmakṣema's (lost) translation of the early fifth century.[2432] The **Mahāprajñāpāramitā-śāstra* was translated into Chinese by Kumārajīva in 404 or 405.[2433] Buddhabhadra arrived in Chang'an in 406-408, and completed his translation of the *Avataṃsaka* around 420. The **Tathāgatapratibimbapratiṣṭhânuśaṃsā-sūtra* in the Taishō canon is much later than these other texts, being a translation attributed to Devaprajñā 提雲般若, a Khotanese monk who worked in Luoyang between 689 and 691.[2434] In sum, one or more of this complex of ideas, of which it is so difficult to find almost any trace prior to 400 C.E., are thereafter

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[2430] Lamotte, *Marche,* 2, 44. Lamotte reasonably cautions against the assumption that the order and date of appearance of texts in the Chinese record is necessarily a direct reflection of Indian textual history; 43. Lamotte reviews the information given by historical catalogues about purported translations, 63-66; and then analyses what the catalogues tell us about each of these lost translations in turn, 66-105. He notes that the Lokakṣema version is among a small handful of texts attributed to him that are authenticated by colophons dating back to the late third or early fourth century, 66; this information is based upon information found already in the *Chu sanzang ji ji* of Sengyou, T2145, which cited the lost catalogue of Dao'an; 68.

[2431] The only other extant version of the text is a Tibetan translation of the ninth century; Lamotte, *Marche,* 1-2. It is true that Lamotte regards this text, notwithstanding the dates of our extant versions, as one of the earliest, non-systematic Mahāyāna texts; Lamotte, *Marche,* 46. Lamotte, however, seems to tend to regard questions of dating through the lens of an assumption that systematisation increases over time; thus, e.g. at 49, he sees the Mahāprajñāpāramitā as posterior to a slew of less systematic texts, including the *Śūraṃgama,* but also *Aṣṭasāhasrikā, Pratyutpannasamādhi, Vimalakīrti, Sukhāvatī* etc. In the face of the broad pattern of evidence we are examining here, I see no reason for confidence that the ideas of immortality and related embodiments etc. predate the period in which they appear in other texts.

[2432] Emmerick x.

[2433] Lamotte, *Traité* I, vii.

[2434] *Hôbôgirin* 241.

witnessed in the works of Kumārajīva, Dharmakṣema, Guṇabhadra,[2435] Huiyan and Xie Lingyun, Faxian,[2436] Buddhabhadra, Buddhayaśas and Zhu Fonian,[2437] and Buddhaśanta.[2438]

To summarise, then, in the period reflected by a cluster of translations in the Chinese record around or after 400 C.E., we see the sudden emergence of a new twist on the idea that the Buddha's body is *like* adamant, where the texts begin saying that he has an "adamant body". As we have seen, in this same period, we also see the sudden new emergence of texts that associate his adamant embodiment with his immortality, and this seems to be linked, further, with the development, in this same period, of docetistic assertions that despite appearances, Śākyamuni was just as long-lived or immortal as other cosmic Buddhas had been said to be for some time.

5.1.8 Conclusions

From the perspective of a certain understanding of the basic nature of Buddhism, the concept of an immortal Buddha might be regarded as an aberration. Many scholars have admired Buddhism for its "admirable consistency", etc., in including the Buddha and the Dharma under the basic teaching of impermanence: that is, for holding that even Buddhas die, and even the Dharma ultimately fades away. Here, however, we have traced the emergence of a set of ideas that seem to directly contradict the basic teaching that all things are impermanent. The Buddha is immortal, and indeed, this immortality has a bodily expression (or at least corollary) – his body is in fact of adamant, utterly permanent and indestructible. How, we

[2435] See n. 2417.

[2436] See n. 2416.

[2437] See n. 2415.

[2438] See n. 2419.

might well ask, did a teaching founded on the impermanence of all things as its basic principle come to such a pass as to consider utter, material, corporeal permanence as an integral part of its highest ideal?

In this section of this dissertation, I have tried to trace some broad stages in the emergence of this idea, in the hope of providing at least some partial answers to this question. In these concluding remarks, I hope to try and tie the stages of this development into some of the broader historical currents we have traced in this dissertation. I will argue that these ideas are the outcome of a long process of development, in which they are influenced by a number of factors, but that in the perspective provided by a long-term and broad view of the relevant doctrinal contexts in which it takes placed, this development has a great deal of internal logic, and that the concept of the immortal Buddha is certainly not a mere aberration. I also hope, in arguing for this logic, to show that the ideas of the immortal permanence and adamantine body of the Buddha are best understood as part of the larger history of ideas about the Buddha's embodiments.

In Chapter 2.2 of this dissertation, I argued at length that the concept of the "undying" (*amṛta*) is an important but often overlooked aspect of the conceptualisation of the religious ideal from the very earliest known phases of Buddhist doctrine. I attempted to connect this epithet or characterisation with the religious ideal with a range of other phenomena in early Buddhism, including both ideas (the conquest of Māra, the symbolism of the quenching of the flame in the concept of *nibbāna,* etc.) and practice (charnel-ground dwelling and corpse contemplation, the association between Buddhist sites and megalithic funerary grounds, usurping the Brahminical monopoly on efficacious *śraddhā* rites, the assertion of dominion over spirits of the dead). My

goal was to suggest that the conquest or evasion of death was a significant dimension of the religious goal already in early Buddhism.

We also saw there that even back into possible Upaniṣadic forerunners of Buddhist *amṛta/amata* ideas, the realisation of the undying is often associated with disidentification from the given, fleshly body, a theme that is obviously continued in the Buddhist materials, where if anything it seems perhaps to become even more central. There is thus a clear opposition between the attainment of undying and the inadequate condition of ordinary given embodiment even in the earliest Buddhist materials, which shows us that the ideal of the undying is an implicit critique of the ordinary body, and thus that Buddhism presents itself, in at least this sense, as a solution to the problem of death. The corporeal associations of the death as a problem and the attainment of the undying as a solution are also echoed, we saw, in the centrality of various meditations on the corruptibility and ultimate mortality of the body to the curriculum of practice in early Buddhism, and in the expression of liberation by the phrase "touching the undying element (*amṛtadhātu*) with the body".

I also argued, at various junctures especially in Chapter 2.1, that the inadequacy of the ordinary given body can be interpreted on textual evidence and from some *a priori* considerations as stemming largely from its mutability, its corruptibility and ultimately its mortality, and indeed, that the body is the key "site" on which each sentient being is locked into the realm of suffering and in which they encounter suffering, and thus that the doctrine of impermanence itself is in a sense nothing more than the problem of the mutable and mortal body writ large.

In this chapter, we have traced a number of avenues by which various ideas developed, some of them perhaps initially only tangentially related to the old ideal of the "undying", to ultimately

feed into the resurfacing of that old ideal in the newly effabilist-kataphatic, unabashedly glorious, and very solidly embodied form of the avowedly immortal *vajrakāya* Buddha.

Even in the Pāli materials, beings in spatially or temporally remote reaches of the cosmos are already understood to have much longer lifespans than beings of our world, and we first see the use of elaborate analogies to convey the mind-bending scale of long lifespans, later used for Buddhas and beings in their Buddha-lands, in connection with such beings. We also already see in the Pāli canon the idea that the Buddha has at least potentially infinite lifespan, in the sense that his lifespan is said to be under his voluntary control and he could "life for a *kalpa* or more than a *kalpa*". This is obviously connected with the idea that the Buddha also chooses the moment of his own death, similarly attested in the Pāli materials. These ideas continued in later texts, alongside the development of other concepts we traced.

The next observable phase in the development of these ideas, I have suggested, is found in one of the small pools of light cast by the inscriptional record in the otherwise almost overwhelming darkness of the period I here call the chronological "black box" that intervenes between the close of the Pāli canon and the inception of the Chinese textual record. I observed above that the Senavarma Inscription, in particular, refers tantalisingly (and apparently) to the relic enshrined as the "undying relic/element" (**amṛtadhātu*), a phrase that plays on the old notion of the *amatadhātu* and apparently applies it to a claim that the relic, as a veritable body of the Buddha, contains or is somehow animated by the essential qualities of his buddhahood.[2439] I also noted that there are later texts, especially the *Mūlasarvāstivāda-vinaya* but perhaps also the Qin translation of the *Kāśyapaparivarta*,[2440] in which the five "pure

[2439] I argued this interpretation of a number of features of the inscription in detail above, in §4.1.2.5.

[2440] See once more p. 534 and n. 1161.

aggregates" seem to be understood to somehow survive the final death of enlightened persons, and on the basis of this and a number of other factors, suggested that the claim that these pure aggregates infuse or "quicken" relics is another indication that the relics are held to be true "bodies" of the Buddha, and in that sense, that Gregory Schopen is right in suggesting that the relics are alive, that is, that the person has survived their death in the relics. In these senses, it seems to me, we see in the Kharoṣṭhī reliquary inscriptions the first remote and partially inscrutable stirrings of positive ideas about the post-mortem survival of enlightened persons, which constitute a step on the way to the more robustly effabilist[2441] notions of survival of death and immortal embodiment we saw later in this section.

The place of relics in the overall arc of development we are tracing here draws our attention to a more general logical connection between the category of a veritable body of the Buddha, other than his final fleshly body in which he became awakened, and the category of post-mortem survival and ultimate potential immortality. The very category of (a functional or operational) body implies, as I have argued elsewhere in this dissertation,[2442] that the person is genuinely presenced in the body to other beings in the world. Our general understanding of this category requires that the person be "alive" in order for the body to actually function as a body; in the case of a (truly) "dead body", the body, we usually understand, is reduced to a lump of stuff, and no longer "embodies" anyone. This means, however, that a logical corollary of the claim that the Buddha is veritably embodied in *any* form other than his fleshly body will always be that he survives the physical death of that body, and lives for so long as the veritable body endures. Indeed, this is conceivably a central part of the point of the proliferating range of claimed veritable Buddha-bodies over the course of Buddhist history – that in each, the Buddha

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[2441] See n. 39-42 for relevant definitions.

[2442] See p. 576.

is genuinely present in the world, and we need not therefore endure the perils and hopelessness of a Buddhaless universe.

This logic seems to suggest that the conception of the Buddha's survival beyond his *parinirvāṇa* is at least in principle coeval with the concept that he might have any other veritable body than the fleshly body that underwent that *parinirvāṇa,* and thus that once body discourse began, the emergence of conceptions of his extended or even infinite lifespan may thus ultimately have been only a matter of time.

It also implies, to return to the more local problem of the place of relics in the development of ideas of the Buddha's prolonged or eternal life, that to the extent that I have been successful in arguing in this dissertation that relics are indeed veritable bodies of the Buddha, we should also consider, at least in a general implicit sense, that the Buddha's lifespan was extended in the relics.[2443]

As we saw in this chapter, this faint and perhaps implicit beginning of the idea of the Buddha's extended lifespan, or post-mortem survival, in the relic cult is followed by a range of other materials in the post-Pāli-canonical textual record. As is so often the case with ideas whose origins we would like to trace in Buddhism, ideas about the actual extreme longevity of cosmically remote Buddhas seem to spring quite fully-formed out of the chronological "black box", and already, as we saw, the translations of Lokakṣema attest strongly that the idea that at least Buddhas in other dizzyingly distant Buddha-worlds are in fact inordinately long-lived, and

[2443] For the sake of simplicity I am deliberately bracketing out here arguments, possibly elaborated by later scholastic rationalisers of relic worship, that the relics functioned in virtue of an act of "empowerment" (*adhiṣṭhāna*) performed by the Buddha during his last lifetime with regard to them, and thus that the operation of the relics "*in loco buddhi*", so to speak, does not abrogate at all the fact of his genuine demise.

possibly, in the case of the Mahāsthāmaprāpta-become-Buddha of the vastly remote future in the Larger *Sukhāvatīvyūha,* actually exempt from *parinirvāṇa* and immortal.

We also saw that already in this period, the mind-boggling analogical methods of conveying the idea of unimaginably long lifespans first seen in application to denizens of hells etc. in Pāli materials have been applied to the actual lifespans of cosmically remote Buddhas, and we considered reasons that it is difficult to distinguish, except in abstract principle, between such lifespans and lifespans that are actually infinite. I argued in this connection that rather than thinking that these vast lifespans are understood as actually delimited by the eventual *parinirvāṇa* of the Buddhas concerned, we might be better to think of the simultaneous maintenance of incalculable lifespan and eventual *parinirvāṇa* for such Buddhas as an unresolved conceptual tension in the texts. Certainly, even excepting the slight hint of actualised immortality in the case of Mahāsthāmaprāpta, it seems that if we have not yet quite arrived at actual immortality, we are already very close to it for these cosmically remote Buddhas, whose lifespans defy all calculation.

In contemplating the reasons for these developments, I in part followed the arguments of Jan Nattier, who has argued cogently that they may in part have been a corollary to the development of the idea of cosmically remote Buddha-worlds itself. First, where there are potentially innumerable Buddha-worlds in which *bodhisattvas* can realise their aspirations and become a Buddha, the pressure of the "queue" in our current world-system is enormously relieved, and the systematic pressure for each Buddha to move aside in a timely fashion and make room for successors is less. This removes one significant obstacle to the expansion *ad infinitum* of the lifespan of Buddhas that we see in these materials, which is difficult to imagine without the multiple-world cosmology. Second, however, there is a kind of "demand-side"

logic, which requires that there will still be a Buddha present and teaching in the world on arrival, without which the very purpose of the world would seemingly be defeated. This provides us with a plausible logical motor which may have driven the actualisation of the potential represented by multiple-world cosmology, and in part account for the idea that the lifespans of remote Buddhas is in fact inordinately long (and, further, that they systematically ensure the succession in cases where they *do* eventually enter *parinirvāṇa*).

However, I do not believe that these considerations can by any means account for all we see in the development of these ideas, and it seems that considerable explanatory power can be found in links to other developments in embodiment doctrine as a whole.

In part due to the conceptual tension described immediately above between inordinately extended lifespan and *parinirvāṇa*, it was not long before one side of the apparent contradiction gave way, and the *parinirvāṇa* of such Buddhas was reinterpreted in terms of a docetistic Buddhalogy that, as we already saw in Chapter 4.2, was certainly already available by this period. This development is clearly evidenced by developments in a number of texts translated by Dharmarakṣa, and we can thus be fairly clear, I believe, that actual immortality was attributed at least to cosmically remote Buddhas by about the early part of the third century of the Common Era.

The connection to docetistic Buddhalogy here points us to one of the most important places where these developments in ideas about the immortality of the Buddha seem clearly linked to broader developments we trace in this dissertation at large. I argued in Chapter 4.2 (esp. in §4.2.8 and §4.2.9) that the evidence of the *Lokânuvartanā-sūtra,* our best evidence for the earliest phases we can know about in this body of ideas, strongly suggests that docetistic Buddhism

emerged in clear conjunction with nascent and yet unnamed developments that would ultimately coalesce under the term *dharmakāya,* and more broadly, that there are intimate links between the elaboration of docetism and what I characterised as a kind of "metaphysical/ontological docetism", that is, a kind of gnosticism characterising the emergent Mahāyāna "metaphysic" of the "absolute" variously conceived (especially, in these early phases, in terms of *dharmadhātu, dharmatā,* Thusness etc.). More specifically, I argued that the docetistic interpretation of the Buddha's final earthly lifetime and body, and of the specific details thereof, is a logical consequence (at least possible if not necessary) of the claim that the Buddha is in fact most veritably embodied in the "absolute" – an answer to the question, "If the Buddha is most veritably embodied in his gnosis (*prajñāpāramitā*, *sarvajñatā* etc.)/its object (*dharma, dharmatā, dharmadhātu, tathatā*), what was that apparent body in which he walked around the Gangetic Plain?"

We saw in our study of LAn and related materials that the docetistic interpretation of the Buddha's final lifetime seems not to have been extended specifically to the *parinirvāṇa* in the earlier texts in this line (with the possible exception of the *Niraupamyastava* attributed to Nāgārjuna, which we saw is unusual for more reasons than this alone). However, once more, it seems that it is only a short logical step between the elaboration of a generally docetistic vision of the Buddha's last earthly life and the application of that vision to the *parinirvāṇa*, which is the step we see in the phase evidenced by Dharmarakṣa's translations. Moreover, it is also clear and surely uncontroversial that the emergent Mahāyāna understanding of the "absolute" most generally, to which I have related the emergence of docetism in general, carried from soon after the outset, at least for a significant portion of the tradition, strong and logical overtones of immutability, stasis, self-identity, permanence and related qualities. It is also a short logical step in this direction, surely, from the notion that the Buddha is truly identical with this

"absolute" in some sense (i.e. that he is, as soon came to be said overtly, "embodied in the *dharma*[*-ta, -dhātu*]"), to the notion that the Buddha also must in truth be immutable, static, self-identical – and indeed permanent. In this direction, also, then, the emergency of the concept of the Buddha's immortality is surely a logical concomitant of other developments that we have seen taking place in exactly the same period in Buddhist doctrinal history.

It is thus surely not coincidental that so far as we can see from the Chinese record in both cases, the timing we have observed in the emergence of the idea of the Buddhas' actual immortality and the docetistic interpretation of *parinirvāṇa* is almost identical to the timing of the emergence of the notion of the *dharmakāya* so-named. We saw in §4.5.2 that the earliest clear and clearly datable[2444] instance of the idea of the *dharmakāya* named as such that I have found is in Zhi Qian's translation of the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa,* and thus falls some time in the first half of the third century C.E. Very soon thereafter, in the translation corpus of Dharmarakṣa, we see this concept suddenly widely attested in a broad range of texts, often in opposition to the *rūpakāya,* which is first seen at all in the Chinese record in these contexts. This is, of course, the self-same Dharmarakṣa in whose work we have in this section seen emerge the clear docetistic interpretation of the *parinirvāṇa* and thus the clear conception of actual immortality of the Buddhas. It seems very likely that these developments are connected, therefore, and that the idea of the Buddhas' actual immortality emerges as the logical corollary of the explicit doctrine of their embodiment in *dharma.*

Once these ideas had developed in connection with cosmically remote Buddhas, it is difficult to imagine that they could have endured for long without being applied to Śākyamuni as well; we would otherwise have been confronted with an awkward and indeed probably untenable

[2444] Bearing in mind, once more, the possible earlier instance in Nāgārjuna's *Ratnâvalī,* which I considered in §4.5.3.

situation in which other Buddhas were better than our Buddha, and in addition to the blow this might have dealt to the narcissistic self-regard of all the inhabitants of Jambudvīpa, such a proposition is also fundamentally at odds with the very conception of buddhahood that is at stake, namely, that all Buddhas are in fact ultimately identical precisely in virtue of their identity with the "absolute".

It should thus not surprise us to find, as indeed we do, that the first evidence we have of the application of the ideas we traced here to Śākyamuni, and thus the final step in the development of the idea that all Buddhas are in fact immortal, lies once again in the translation corpus of Dharmarakṣa, and therefore in the same period. In Dharmarakṣa's *Lotus Sutra,* Śākyamuni's lifespan is incalculably long, he is said to be eternal, and so forth. This is the only instance I have been able to find so early of the apparent assertion of immortality with regard to Śākyamuni, and may suggest that the *Lotus Sutra* occupies an important place in the application of these new ideas to the Buddha of our world. Once we enter the fourth century, however, as evidenced by the wave of translations into Chinese grouped in the decades around 400 C.E., the idea that Śākyamuni is immortal is suddenly everywhere.

In the last parts of this section, I showed that the explosion of this idea is attended by a related new set of ideas about the Buddha's body itself – that the Buddha's body is in fact of adamant (*vajrakāya*). As we saw, this idea develops in two stages.

In a first stage, which is evidenced as early as the beginning of our Chinese textual record in the works of Lokakṣema, the body of the Buddha is held to be *like* adamant, but it does not seem that it is yet held to be exactly made *of* adamant. Also characteristic of this stage is the use of this trope of the adamantine in a variety of connections, including the emphasis of the

Buddha's strength, purity, immunity to physical harm, and his identity with the "absolute", among which, however, I have been unable to find any direct connections with any particular doctrine about his lifespan.

In the second stage, which coincides with a huge upsurge in attestation of the idea that Śākyamuni himself is also immortal and is directly tied to it in our texts, as represented most strikingly by MPNS, the language in which this trope of the adamantine body changes, and instead of a body *like* adamant, we get a body *of* adamant. Here, the sense of the trope also changes, and it comes for the first time and quite regularly to express the actual immortality of the Buddha. In developments that are surely related, we are informed in some texts that it is actually the *dharmakāya* that is made of adamant; that it is actually the *dharmakāya* that is immortal, and so on. In this sense, it seems as though the emergence of the doctrine of the *vajrakāya* proper, as opposed to its various prolepses in the multiple senses in which the Buddha's body is *like* adamant in earlier texts, provides another retrospective confirmation of the interpretation I advanced above, that the emergence of the idea of the actual immortality of the Buddhas is tied closely to the emergence of the full-fledged idea that they are embodied in the "absolute". The immortality of the Buddha is a corporeal matter inasmuch as the Buddhas' real immortality inheres in their identity to the immutable absolute, and the tradition wastes little time, it seems, in turning this around and finding a specifically corporeal expression for their actual immortality in the *vajrakāya*.

Thus, I hope that I have succeeded in showing that viewed in light of the history of ideas about embodiments, and a specific trajectory of developments that led up to its elaboration, the idea of the immortal Buddha, far from being the aberration it might appear to be from certain

points of view, is in fact an explicable and logical organic development of ongoing shifts in Buddhist doctrine.

Indeed, I further believe that it is too facile to assume that a putative "basic Buddhism" is such a simple matter that it is even possible for us to adjudge the notion of the immortal Buddha a plain contradiction of its founding posit of the impermanence of all things. To treat this complex matter too briefly, the question of whether the truth, i.e. impermanence itself, is or is not impermanent on a view that holds that all things are impermanent leads to a familiar impasse analogous in their structure to the "Barber of Seville" paradox, the Cretan liar paradox and so on, an impasse that we might refer to in the Buddhist context as the "antinomy of emptiness". As the long centuries of unresolved controversy between the Tibetan *rang stong* and *gzhan stong* schools of thought surely show, the question of whether impermanence is impermanent (to which the question of emptiness is empty is related as another variation on the same theme) is a genuine dilemma, where each horn is equally untenable; and we might well suspect that "basic Buddhism" appreciated this fact from the very outset, in giving such a central role to the category of the "middle way", a *tertium quid,* if we will, that refuses the very binary terms in which the dilemma is posed from the outset.

At least from the point at which the Buddha is in fact identified with the "absolute", with truth itself, and so on, therefore, it seems that the choice of whether he "actually" perishes or is "actually" immortal and eternal is equally parlous whichever way we look at it. The question then becomes, of course, where that point lies, and on this question, as on the basic question of the state of the Buddha in *nirvāṇa,* the possibility of positive ideal embodiments, or indeed, the nature of the "absolute" itself, it seems likely to me, as I argue for the case of embodiment throughout this dissertation, that what we see in Buddhist doctrinal history looks far more like

a shift in rhetorical *strategy* over time, such that it admits more and more a legitimate role for effabilism, than a fundamental shift in basic position. Where a system of thought might admit certain propositions but refuses to articulate explicitly; where it holds truth ineffable; where it holds it downright harmful to articulate certain truths in the framework of a soteriological endeavour, etc. – in cases like these, it is certainly true that is difficult to mount convincing arguments one way or another to differentiate such a change in surface rhetorical strategy from a change in underlying tenets. In the present instance, however, I hope to have suggested that continuities between the idea of the Buddha's outright immortality and the very old idea that gave to the salvific goal of Buddhism the epithet of "the undying" (*amṛta*).

Considerations such as these, however, show clearly that here, as in any case where we examine causality in the history of ideas, observable developments are the product of a complex web of heterogeneous factors, and I certainly do not imagine that the analysis I have given here comprises an exhaustive account of the reasons that Buddhism came to consider the Buddha immortal or his most veritable embodiment correspondingly of adamant. Indeed, in closing this section, I must add a brief coda to this section in order to mention one further factor that it seems to me *may* have been a contributing factor in the mix.

It is a very curious fact that around the same time that we observe the developments we have traced in this section in the Chinese record, we also see a sudden rash of attestations of theretofore unprecedented notions that seem to be connected with the alchemical practices of aurifaction and seeking immortality by elixirs. Now, I believe that I have shown in this section that there were at work sufficient forces internal to the Buddhist tradition to account for the emergence of the idea of the Buddha's immortality, and that these ideas were at work well before we ever see any sign of this alchemical complex impinging on the Buddhist record. I

also think that we can see quite ample factors within Buddhism itself to explain the almost immediate articulation of this notion of immorality in specifically corporeal terms, both in the possible connection between the very idea of the Buddha's immortality *per se* and the idea of *dharmakāya,* and also in the general upsurge of new ideas about the Buddha's embodiments that we are tracing in the present Chapter 5 of this dissertation as a whole. The contribution of the "alchemical factor" is not a necessary condition for these developments. On the other hand, I must also sound a note of caution about these possible alchemical influences on the ideas we have studied here because, on the whole, I think that previous work on the possibility of a role for the impact of alchemical ideas on Buddhist thinking – I am thinking primarily of the speculations of Joseph Needham on this score – have been marred by large and unjustifiable inferential leaps and a slipshod attitude towards evidence.

However, I also think that developments in intellectual history can quite possibly be genuinely overdetermined, and that odd synergies can come into play. It may be possible, therefore, that if alchemical ideas about aurifaction and immortality by elixirs did indeed impinge on the Buddhist consciousness in this same period, they may have contributed in some way to the developments we have seen; in particular, I wonder whether they might at least have been responsible in part for tipping the balance in the use of the conceit of the adamantine body so that many of its apparent older associations fell away, and it came more and more to be used most dominantly to express the idea of the Buddha's immortality.

The evidence for these alchemical developments is in itself highly complex, however, and in the final analysis, it seems likely to me that even if such ideas did play a part in the history of Buddhist ideas about embodiment, it was probably slight in the period here under study (though it doubtless grew more pronounced in later Tantric contexts). For this reason, I have

relegated consideration of that evidence to Appendix 2 of this dissertation, where interested readers may consult my arguments and decide for themselves.

Chapter 5.2: *Āśrayaparāvṛtti* as a doctrine of (re-)embodiment

5.2.1 Introduction

Āśrayaparāvṛtti (var. *āśrayaparivṛtti*[2445]), which I will here translate as "revolutionary transformation of the basis" or "radical transformation of the basis", is a term referring to a transformation of the person that attends the attainment of enlightenment or liberation. Here, *āśraya* means "basis" in the sense of "support", something that is "depended upon" (*āśrita*) or taken as a fundamental condition; I will have occasion to suggest below that on occasion, "ground" is also an appropriate rendering. *Parāvṛtti,* from the verb */vṛt* "to turn, change, revolve, function, operate" etc., means "transform", but also "to turn away", "to turn around, revolve", "to desist from", "to return" etc.[2446] As we will see below, in the compound *āśrayaparāvṛtti* it consistently refers to some kind of radical transmutation or even replacement of the "basis" of the person, such that it becomes something starkly different from what it was at the outset.

The notion of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* is one of the central concepts in Yogācāra Buddhist doctrine and philosophy. This term does not occur in any known text that can be shown to be earlier than the *Yogācārabhūmi* (YBh), and so it seems most likely that the term itself originates in the Yogācāra context (as opposed to being a term that they took up from elsewhere and reworked),

[2445] Takasaki Jikidō in particular has proposed that there is a systematic distinction between *āśrayaparāvṛtti* and *āśrayaparivṛtti*; see e.g. Takasaki, "Tenne"; also *Study* 187 n. 6. However, Schmithausen has concluded that there is no systematic distinction between these terms; Schmithausen, *Nirvāṇa-Abschnitt* 90-104, i.e. n. 34; cited in Sakuma, *Theorie* I, 1. Sakuma Hidenori has also shown that Tibetan translators, at least, seem to have made very little if any systematic distinction between them in their translation practice, which suggests that if any such distinction did indeed originally exist, the sense of it was lost quite early; see Sakuma, "*Parivṛtti* oyobi *parāvṛtti*". At any rate, for our present purposes, I do not believe the possibility of this distinction need detain us.

[2446] See Monier-Williams s.v. *parāvṛt*.

and that our earliest evidence for it is in the earlier strata of YBh itself, namely the *Śrāvakabhūmi.*[2447]

Without wishing to dispute Sakuma's sound historical reasoning, it is worth recalling here that much earlier in this dissertation, we did have occasion to note in passing one premonition of the idea of *āśrayaparāvṛtti,* in the sense in which we will examine it here. This foreshadowing of the idea was chronologically very remote from our present context: the Pāli-canonical understanding that contemplation of the body leads to a state referred to as "baseless" (*anissita,* **anāśrita*), that is, in which one is no longer attached to anything in the world. I suggested above[2448] that this notion has resonances with *āśrayaparāvṛtti.* I know of no reason to think that the coincidence of terminology here (*ā/śri, āśrita, āśraya*) is a product of anything more than chance, but it is interesting that what I have characterised above as the Pāli-canonical ideal of *dis*embodiment, that is, complete disidentification from the body, should be expressed by the same term, that is, that as here, the body is understood similarly as the usual, given – but inadequate – "ground" or basis of the human person.[2449]

We are fortunate, in the study of the concept of *āśrayaparāvṛtti,* to have the work of a number of previous scholars, including the relatively comprehensive studies of Ronald Davidson[2450] and Sakuma Hidenori. Sakuma, in particular, has made a very valuable and careful study of the origins of the concept, and its rich complexity from the very beginnings, in the *Yogācārabhūmi*

[2447] Sakuma, *Die Āśrayaparivṛtti-theorie* 8-9, 31-32, 90-91; cited in Franco's review, 344.

[2448] See p. 162 above.

[2449] See p. 706 above.

[2450] Davidson's PhD dissertation covers a considerable range of representative primary literature on the topic, though I find it difficult in places to follow his analysis.

(YBh).[2451] Among his most interesting findings, which we will however have little occasion to return to here, Sakuma shows that *āśrayaparāvṛtti* is not attested in any text that can be securely dated earlier than the earliest portions of YBh containing it; that it was first used to refer to a process whereby meditation leads to the replacement of "badness" (*dauṣṭhulya*) by "ease" (*praśrabdhi*),[2452] that in other early uses it refers to the supernatural perception of the object of meditation;[2453] that it does not seem, initially, to have necessarily been associated with a final state of liberation;[2454] that in some uses it is clear that it is understood it can be a gradual process;[2455] and so on.[2456] Sakuma also arranges the various doctrines into a relative chronology within YBh itself, in accordance with a theory of the stratified composition of the text, while sensibly cautioning that the development was of course not unilinear, and that more than one conception of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* may have been current at a given time.[2457]

Most importantly for our present purposes, however, Sakuma shows throughout his study that *āśrayaparāvṛtti* is not necessarily one single concept, but rather, that a number of differing interpretations, or at least emphases, seem to have been current, and also that it is likely that

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2451 Sakuma's 1990 German monograph on the concept in the *Yogācārabhūmi* (hereafter *Theorie*); the second volume of this study is an extremely useful collection of relevant passages in the text, presented variorum in Sanskrit, Tibetan and (sometimes two) Chinese versions. Given my inability to read German easily and quickly, I have been forced to rely primarily for information on Sakuma's overall findings in this work on his summary article in Japanese, "*Yugashi-ji ron . . .* ", and on the "English Summary" at *Theorie* I, 164-170.

2452 Sakuma, "*Yugashi-ji ron*" 440-439; *Theorie* I, 164-165.

2453 Sakuma, "*Yugashi-ji ron*" 439; *Theorie* I, 165.

2454 Sakuma, "*Yugashi-ji ron*" 439; *Theorie* I, 165. See also "*Yugashi-ji ron*" 439-438, *Theorie* I, 166 on the *Vastusaṃgrahaṇī* as the first place where the link to the doctrine of deliverance is found.

2455 Sakuma, "*Yugashi-ji ron*" 440; *Theorie* I, 165.

2456 Other components of Sakuma's argument are cited in relevant places below.

2457 Sakuma summarises this internal chronology of the text in outline, and offers this caution, in *Theorie* I, 164.

the overall range of interpretations underwent relatively rapid change over the period witnessed by the accretional composition of YBh as a whole. In what follows, I will attempt to argue that it is possible to recognise a greater degree of coherence across the overall range of things said about *āśrayaparāvṛtti* in the "classic" Yogācāra texts when we recognise that the doctrine is fundamentally a doctrine of (re-)embodiment. I will also be subject to logistical restrictions that will prevent me from exploring all the texts I cite in the detail with which Sakuma has treated his. I will therefore be generalising about *āśrayaparāvṛtti,* and attempting to show a dimension in which it is a relatively unified concept across these texts, even in spite of the surface variation and detail. I wish to state at the outset that I do not want to convey by this argument the impression that I fail to recognise the complexity and ongoing historical development so aptly identified by Sakuma. Rather, it is simply that within the context of the larger history of embodiment doctrines, the aspect of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* doctrine that is of most relevance is a certain underlying thematic unity that runs through the various specific inflections of the concept, and conversely, that it is in application to this common underlying thematic that the orienting frame provided by the history of embodiment doctrine promises to offer most to the interpretation of *āśrayaparāvṛtti.*

Sakuma has also followed up his major study with a series of articles on the concept of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* in a series of (mostly later) Yogācāra texts, such as the *Abhidharmasamuccayabhāṣya,* commentarial works by Sthiramati, and the *Dharmadharmatāvibhāga.*[2458] To these works can be added a small but significant body of secondary literature by other scholars.[2459]

[2458] These other articles by Sakuma are listed in the bibliography, and following in total a series of important further developments Sakuma sees in the concept over time after YBh.

[2459] Much of the remaining secondary literature focuses on developments in *āśrayaparāvṛtti* doctrine too late for our present purposes, but thereby serves in sum as another useful reminder that the concepts that concern us in this study continued to be contested foci of intensive doctrinal creativity well after

Obviously I will not rehash here the entirety of the complex body of material presented by this scholarship. It will be my aim here to trace only themes and ideas that have specifically to do with the problematic of embodiment. This means that I will break with the finely gradated chronological presentation used by Sakuma, for instance, whose primary concern is to produce a history of these ideas, and adopt a more thematic approach; this is only a break with the overall chronological presentation of ideas in this dissertation in its details, however, and the materials I present will almost without exception date to the same broad period in the early phase of the Yogācāra. For the purposes of this analysis, in order to keep this study within manageable bounds and in order to focus most precisely on materials of most relevance to the questions to hand, I will use two criteria in selecting material for examination.

First, I will restrict my examination to materials dating down to what we might loosely call the epoch of the "classic" Yogācāra, that is, the period in which the texts of "Maitreya", Asaṇga and Vasubandhu were produced, though I will also include some materials not (usually) attributed to those authors, such as the *Saṃdhinirmocana-sūtra,* the *Laṃkāvatāra-sūtra* and the *Ratnagotravibhāga.*[2460] This is because my main aim here, as in this study at large, is to properly contextualise the emergence of "classic" *trikāya* theory in works of the same *milieu* and period. The concept of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* underwent complex further development in subsequent

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the period covered by this dissertation. For a somewhat confused presentation of one example of the relations between *āśrayaparāvṛtti* and Paramārtha's famous concept of *amalavijñāna,* see Osaki, "What is Meant". For *āśrayaparāvṛtti* in the *Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi* of Dharmapāla/Xuanzang, see la Vallée Poussin, *Siddhi* II, 607-612, 661-667. For a somewhat ahistorical interpretation of the concept, primarily in MSA and Sthiramati's commentary, see Nagao Gadjin, "Connotations of the Word". For a "heterodox" later Chinese reading of the term, see Hasegawa, "Tenshiki-tokuchi". For an instance of the later, Tantric vicissitudes of this concept (which incidentally makes a nonsense of any idea that all the action in body discourse was over after *trikāya*) see Cerbu, "A Tun-Huang Version".

[2460] I am aware that the Tibetan tradition attributes RGV to Maitreya, of course; but modern scholarship does not usually consider it a work of the same author as e.g. the verses of MSA or *Madhyântivibhāga*.

literature, of course, but to examine those developments would certainly lead us too far astray here.

Second, I will focus primarily on passage where the concept of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* at play is particularly relevant to the problematic of embodiment in some way.

However, some uses of this complex concept are on the surface of things only remotely related to the problematic, if at all – for example, uses whereby *āśraya* refers to the "storehouse consciousness" (*ālayavijñāna*), or to the "dependent nature" (*paratantrasvabhāva*); or whereby the resultant state is characterised in terms of some relationship to versions of the Mahāyāna "absolute" like the *dharmadhātu* or Thusness (*tathatā*). Despite this, my main contention in this section of this dissertation will be that the majority of these inflections of the concept of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* are also best understood within the framework of an overarching problematic of embodiment.

In order to argue this claim, I will order my consideration of the material roughly from the "most corporeal/concrete" dimensions of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* theory to the "least corporeal/most ethereal". Certain most corporeal readings are so obviously corporeal that the connection between *āśrayaparāvṛtti* and ideas of the body, or modes of embodiment, cannot be controversial, at least in those cases. I will thus consider a range of such cases, in an attempt to first of all establish firmly that there is a broad and consistent pattern whereby *āśrayaparāvṛtti* is indeed a matter of embodiment that much of the time. I will then move on to the apparently more abstract, metaphysical or non-corporeal dimensions of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* theory, and attempt to show that the majority of these conceptions can be understood as attempts to reconfigure the very problematic of embodiment as it is expressed in the notion of

āśrayaparāvṛtti from one of two points of view. I will argue that in the case of the understanding that the *āśraya* to be transformed is in fact the *ālayavijñāna* and not some more overtly fleshly version of the body, what is at stake is the fundamental Vijñaptimātra reinterpretation of the true nature of human being in the world – the reinterpretation often referred to (somewhat misleadingly, but perhaps not entirely inaccurately) as "Buddhist idealism". In the cases where *āśrayaparāvṛtti* is said to be identical with or otherwise somehow intimately related to various versions of the Mahāyāna "absolute", I will argue that the absolute, or a new relation to it, is consistently presented as somehow the *result* of *āśrayaparāvṛtti*, and that the interpretation of these claims within the orienting framework of an overall understanding that *āśrayaparāvṛtti* is primarily a doctrine of (re)embodiment allows us to see that the process of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* in these cases refers to what we might understand as a process of coming to be (or see that we are) *embodied* in the absolute so conceived. Even in the case of these apparently least corporeal dimensions of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* theory, therefore, *āśrayaparāvṛtti* remains a doctrine that takes its meaning from the primary reference to embodiment, and indeed, if we lose sight of this basic fact, I will argue, we miss the very point of the doctrine.

Within the overall framework of this basic organising progression from "most" to "least corporeal", I will somewhat arbitrarily order it further from ordinary given embodiment to the embodiments that seem the most ideal (with the exception of the problem of *āśraya* as *ālayavijñāna,* the complications of which have led me to defer its treatment until near the end of this section). One thing made clear by this mode of treatment is that the connections between *āśrayaparāvṛtti* and embodiment are so consistent and strong that the range of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* theories, considered from this point of view, reads almost like a miniature conspectus of many of the ideas about embodiment we have treated in this dissertation as a whole. Thus, in order,

we will consider relations between *āśrayaparāvṛtti* and: the given body as a sexed organism; the given physical body as a misrecognised and inadequate site and root of suffering (especially as analysed by the rubric of the six "internal sense bases", *ṣaḍāyatana,* but also, later in the section, in terms of the fivefold *skandha* analysis as presented in the *Mahāyānasaṃgraha*); voluntary command over lifespan, which links of course into ideas of bodily immortality; the elaboration of a "body made of mind" (*manomayakāya*); *nirvāṇa* "with and without a remainder" in the corporeal interpretation of those terms, i.e. as referring to *nirvāṇa* with or without a vestigial fleshly body; the Dharma body of the Buddha (*dharmakāya*); and various (other) titles under which the Mahāyāna "absolute" is known, such as Thusness (*tathatā*) or the *dharmadhātu*, which, as we have seen, are frequently and consistently identified with the true being of the Buddha and his *dharmakāya.*

In light of this very broadly recurring range of associations between *āśrayaparāvṛtti* and various aspects of doctrines of embodiment, I will contend that *āśrayaparāvṛtti* is properly to be understood as a doctrine of embodiment or re-embodiment in its most fundamental character, and indeed, that as such, its elaboration represents an important chapter in the overall development of doctrines about the body. As we will further see in detail as the argument progresses below, the term *āśrayaparāvṛtti* and the ideas to which it refers seem to emerge all in a rush and tumble in the course of the fourth century. I will argue in closing this section that the timing of this development is also striking, and that once we have correctly identified the basic orientation of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* theory to the problematic of embodiment, we can see it as part of the extraordinary ferment in a much broader range of ideas about embodiments in the fourth century C.E., which it is one of my main purposes to trace in this chapter. In addition to *āśrayaparāvṛtti,* the new ideas thrown up by this ferment include the ideas about immortal and adamantine embodiments we examined in Chapter 5.1, and, of course, *trikāya* theory. It also

most likely includes, however, the corporeal reinterpretation of *sôpadhiśeṣa-* and *nirupadhiśeṣanirvāṇadhātu* ("the *nirvāṇa*-element with/out remainder"), which, even if it does not originate in this period, seems certainly to have become a hot topic of speculation across a range of quite divergent doctrinal contexts, as we will see when we revisit it one last time in §5.2.8 below.

5.2.2 *Parāvṛtti* in relation to sexual intercourse in the *Mahāyānasūtrâlaṃkāra*

Before I begin my examination of the corporeal connections of *āśrayaparāvṛtti,* it seems necessary to me to dispose of one apparent corporeal association that hangs about the term which I think is actually based upon a mistaken interpretation, or at least (given that the passage concerned is very difficult to interpret with any certainty), an over-interpretation. Rumours, at least, of a kind of corporeal connotation have hung about the concept of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* in the claim that it somehow is connected to, or even originates in, a proto-Tantric notion of the recuperation of sexual energies. Upon scrutiny, this claim seems to me to be merely an instance of the way scholarly discourse periodically makes much ado about very little, a peculiar instance of the distortions that can arise in scholarly games of Chinese whispers. The further one goes from the source of the claim, the more fantastic the edifices that are built on a very slender piece of evidence.

I am thinking particularly of the role we find this claim playing as a key part of the house-of-cards argument mounted as far afield from Buddhist Studies proper as the work of Joseph Needham, for example, where, as we saw above, Needham tries to trace the rise of Tantrism in India to the influence of a (supposed?) diffusion of an alchemical-sexual hygiene (i.e. Taoist) complex from China. Needham claims, in the context of this argument, to be able to discern in the MSA a reference to "the returning or rerouting of the semen", which he interprets as

referring to "the method of perineal pressure in *coitus thesauratus"* (the latter being his term for a method of semen retention achieved by pressing on the urethra at the moment of orgasm, as opposed to *coitus reservatus,* in which the man withdraws without permitting himself orgasm at all), and then goes so far as to say that it is closely analogous to the Chinese idea of *huanjing* 還精.[2461]

This claim is based upon a single instance of the term *maithunasya parāvṛtti* in *Mahāyānasūtrâlaṃkāra* (MSA) 9.46. The context is a series of verses (9.41-46) in which various "revolutions" (*parāvṛtti*) are described as constituting the "power" or "mastery" of the Buddhas. Thus, "highest mastery" (*vibhutaṃ param*) is described as resulting from the *parāvṛtti* (1) of the five sense-organs; (2) of mind (*manaso*) and from an accompanying perfectly taintless special knowledge devoid of imaginative construction (*jñāne nirvikalpe sunirmale*); (3) of *vikalpa*; (4) of the "place of existence" (*pratiṣṭhā*) and (5) of sex (*maithuna*). Of concern to us here, since it bears on the claim that *āśrayaparāvṛtti* itself might derive from a particularly corporeal notion, is 46:

> "Supreme mastery is attained in the *parāvṛtti* of sexual intercourse,
> [That is] in enjoying the well-being of a Buddha, and in regarding one's wife without defilement."[2462]

It seems that the interpretation of this verse in the secondary literature as implying a Tantric sublimation of actual sexual union can be traced back, by every route of which I am aware at

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[2461] Needham, *Science and Civilization* 5, V, 274-275. We already had occasion to examine this and other aspects of Needham's diffusionist account of the origins of Tantrism in Chapter 5.1 above. Needham's arguments in this and other regards are followed by David White in turn, in relevant portions of his *Alchemical Body*.

[2462] *maithunasya parāvṛttau vibhutvaṃ labhyate paraṃ/ buddhasaukhyavihāre 'tha dārā 'saṃkleśadarśane//* Lévi I, 46. "Dans la Révolution de l'Accouplement, on constate une Maîtrise absolue, quant à la Station de bien-être des Bouddhas et à la vision sans Souillure de l'épouse;" Lévi II, 81. "In the transmutation of (sensation, even in) sexual union, highest mastery is attained in the station of the buddha's bliss, while in the unaddicted vision of the consort;" Thurman et al., *Universal Vehicle Discourse Literature* 89. "In the turning-aside of sexual union supreme greatness is obtained, (namely) in the enjoyment (or pleasure-ground) of Buddha-happiness and in looking without impure thoughts at a wife."

least, to a single offhand note by Lévi in his French translation of 1911: "Ce vers fait sans doute allusion aux couples mystiques des Bouddhas et des Bodhisattvas qui ont tant d'importance dans le Tantrisme."[2463] Lévi offered no further reasons for his confidence in this conclusion. Lévi was perhaps followed in this reading of the verse in question by Rolf Stein (Stein does not deign to give sources for any of the ideas he discusses in his essay, so we cannot tell whether he got this reading from Lévi, as seems likely, or arrived at it independently), who in 1974, with a little more caution than Lévi, thought that the present passage most likely could "être à la base des notions et de pratiques essentielles du tantrisme".[2464]

Lévi's "Tantric" reading of this line has not been accepted without argument, of course, though the arguments in this controversy are typically unclear and inconclusive. Winternitz disputed Lévi's reading, claiming that *parāvṛtti* here means rather "to turn aside".[2465] Bagchi offered another very erudite interpretation, and seems to offer to cast considerable light on the relation between the MSA verses and the *bodhisattva* path,[2466] but nonetheless ends on a strange and seemingly inconclusive note, suggesting that he agrees with Lévi that the implication is of

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[2463] Lévi, *Mahāyāna-sūtrâlaṃkāra* II, 81, n. to v. 46.

[2464] Stein, "Étude du monde chinois" 504. Stein's caution here may reflect a potentially more tenable interpretation, that the notion of *parāvṛtti* was later taken up and elaborated, perhaps even from this context, as a way of understanding Tantric practice, though his mode of expression here is somewhat too terse to be sure; this is a very different thing from thinking that we see here clear evidence of an already developed Tantric sexual practice. To be fair to Stein, this article reads like a summary report of the proceedings of a research seminar rather than a carefully argued research article, so that we surely cannot expect, in the confines of the genre, that he will substantiate all his claims or cite all his sources. So much the stranger, however, if Bernard Faure in *Red Thread* relies upon it so heavily as a source of seeming historical fact about the earliest roots of Tantra.

[2465] In "Notes on the *Guhyasamāja Tantra*", 6-8 and n. 14; cited in Bagchi, "Note" 34. Winternitz's reasoning is a little hard to follow here also!

[2466] However, Bagchi seemingly fails to observe that MSA itself relates *āśrayaparāvṛtti* to the *bodhisattva* path, but defines it as occurring at the first *bodhisattva* stage, in contradiction of what he correctly identifies to be the position of LSA. This means that his ingenious interpretation perhaps founders on the assumption of monolithic unity to all "Yogācāra" texts, in the use of the maverick doctrines of LSA to read what may well be a very different text.

"enjoying the bliss of [the] act", but that he interprets it in a kind of abstract sense as the sublation of dualism (?).[2467]

Most recently, however, within the fold of Buddhist studies, Thurman et al. have returned to the Tantric interpretation, reading the verse with Lévi as implying Tantric practice, saying, "The tantric allusion here could not be clearer".[2468] It seems, then, that a century later, Lévi's reading is certainly not dead, even among technical Buddhologists.

The implications of this reading would be, of course, quite far-reaching: that there is something to the traditional understanding that Asaṇga was the founder of Tantrism, and therefore that Tantrism was present in India by about the end of the fourth century.[2469] In my opinion, however, the total evidence comprised by this and the one or two other equally tenuous textual references adduced in its support is far too slender for us to leap to such conclusions, and we must conclude rather that such a reading is implausible, or at least, that we have too little evidence to know what exactly the present passage means, and what, therefore, might have been current by way of prolepses to Tantric practice in Yogācāra contexts of the late fourth or early fifth centuries.[2470]

[2467] Bagchi, 38-39. I find it difficult to be entirely sure what Bagchi proposes as his interpretation here. On "the significance of this copulation" he says "'coming together' or unity of two categories is implied and this 'coming together' of two categories, I think, is described as *maithunasya parāvṛtti.*"

[2468] Thurman et al., *Universal Vehicle Discourse Literature* 89 n. 66. This interpretation is, of course, clear in their translation, already cited n. 2468.

[2469] These conclusions are drawn clearly, but with a healthy scepticism, for example, by Dasgupta, *Introduction to Tantric Buddhism* 53-54; see also Bagchi 34.

[2470] For example, Thurman et al. suggest that MSA 13.11-13 might support such a connection, *Universal Vehicle Discourse Lit.* 89 n. 66; these verses suggest that because nothing (no *dharma*) is outside the *dharmadhātu,* precisely passion (*rāgādi*) is transcendence of the world (*niḥsaraṇaṃ*), that passion can be overcome with passion in turn, and that through engaging properly (*yoniśaḥ pratipadyate*) with passion one becomes liberated (*vimucyate*); Thurman et al. 169-170, Lévi I, 87. Bernard Faure, has also pointed out a passage in the chapter translated as the "Chapter on Ethics" from the *Bodhisattvabhūmi* in which it is

Nor do I believe that the interpretation of this verse as referring in any sense to a kind of Tantric "sublimation" of sexual energies, through engagement with them, is borne out by an examination of the immediate context of the present verse. Other things are *parāvṛtta* in the surrounding verses: in sequence, the five sense faculties (*pañcêndriya*) (v. 41); defiled [egoistic] mind (*kliṣṭamanas*) (v. 42); [dualistic] apprehension and its object (*sârthôdgraha*) (v. 43); discriminative thought (*vikalpa*) (v. 44); the ambiguous "foundation" or "standing place" (*pratiṣṭha*) (v. 45), which Sthiramati glosses as the *ālayavijñāna;* and the "concept of space" (*ākāśasaṃjña*) (v. 47).[2471] Some of these categories are perhaps ambiguous, as to whether or not

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said that a *bodhisattva* can use sexual intercourse as a skilful means to lead a woman to the *dharma* without incurring fault; Faure, *Red Thread* 4; note that Faure incorrectly refers us to Tatz page 215-216, where BBh is rather paraphrased in the course of Tsong kha pa's commentary; note that Faure is also incorrect in assigning Asaṇga to the third century C.E. The passage in question reads: "The lay *bodhisattva* comes to a woman with the *dharma* of sexual embrace, she being single and her thought subjected to an agony of desire to end her celibacy. He thinks, 'Let her not develop a thought of enmity, and much demerit spread. Rather, let her come under my influence for abandonment of the unwholesome, and whatever is desired be employed as a root of good.' Adopting a thought that is nothing but merciful he resorts to an uncelibate *dharma* of copulation, and there is no fault, but a spread of much merit;" Tatz, *Chapter on Ethics* 71. Tatz translates from the Tibetan, but Skt. corresponds closely enough: *yathā 'pi tad gṛhī bodhisattvaḥ abrahmacaryaiṣaṇārtaṃ tatpratibaddhacittam aparaparigṛhītaṃ mātṛ-grāmaṃ maithunadharmeṇa niṣevate. mā haivāghātacittatāṃ pratilabhya bahv apuṇyaṃ prasoṣyati. yathêpsita-kuśalamūlasaṃniyoge ca vaśyā bhaviṣyaty akuślamūlaparityāge cêty anukaṃpācittam evôpasthāpya. abrahma-caryaṃ maithunaṃ dharmaṃ pratiṣevamāṇo 'py anāpattiko bhavati. bahu ca puṇyaṃ prasūyate;* Wogihara, BBh 167. Faure is of course assuming the traditional ascription of the entirety of YBh to Asaṇga in thinking that this passage is evidence for Asaṇga's attitudes, but even if we take a more agnostic attitude about the composition and authorship of this vast and compendious text, this passage would certainly seem to be evidence at least of the countenancing of the use of sex as *upāyakauśalya* by somebody in the fourth century. All of this becomes relatively immaterial, however, when we observe that this is not yet a recognisably Tantric attitude to sex, whereby sexual practice is used as a means to attain unity with deities, ideal qualities etc., and where the benefactor of these practices is the practitioner and not just a hapless laywoman they want to help! We can only make of this evidence for proto-Tantrism if we attenuate the definition of Tantrism to mean any whiff of an accommodating attitude to sex in any connection whatsoever to the teaching, which is to dilute it until it is of no analytic use whatsoever. The same goes for other general evidence that such loosely related ideas were current in the period, such as the remarkable MPPŚ passage to which Faure also points (Lamotte *Traité* 398-402, for which see above p. 1471 and n. 3163). These tantalising pieces of evidence (and even ideas from the earlier *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa*), though they certainly seem to show a partial upsurge in ideas that sexual conduct could usefully be used in some connection with correct practice in this period, are too little for us to build upon them any large conclusions about watersheds in the history of Buddhist ideas and practice, and too little for us to read back into the MSA passage that concerns us any specific practices or interpretation.

[2471] Thurman et al. 88-89.

they might continue to function in some transformed or restricted sense in the Buddha (e.g. the five senses, or perhaps the *ālayavijñāna* on some readings that hold it to have a "pure aspect"). However, the overall impression conveyed by this list is that the continuation of the majority of its members is simply incompatible with the state of Buddhahood: nobody, surely, would attribute to the Buddhas *any* form, sublimated or otherwise, of *kliṣṭamanas,* or dualistic apprehension of objects, or *vikalpa,* or *saṃjñā.* It is simply implausible, therefore, to pluck sexual conduct (*maithuna*) out of this context on the anachronistic basis of later sexual practices in Tantra, and conclude that the term already has such a reference here: the entirety of the context argues against this reading, and suggests that we must interpret rather that *parāvṛtti* here involves a fairly clean rejection or transcendence of the categories listed, not a transformed engagement with them in some putatively "correct" manner.

The present passage thus presents us with an excellent instance of what I am calling in this dissertation the methodological problem of the "single anomalous instance",[2472] and the arguments of scholars who have built so much upon it, in my opinion, similarly present an excellent cautionary tale of the dangers of making too much of such anomalies. It is certainly not my intention here, therefore, to argue on its basis that there is any strong likelihood that *āśrayaparāvṛtti* originates in some physiological process of sublimating sexual energies etc. I have analysed the passage merely because if it *were* true that the concept of *parāvṛtti* had some special association, as Needham contends, with "coitus thesauratus", then that would obviously constitute important evidence for a corporeal overtone to the concept, and it is therefore important for our present purposes to set aside the misleading claims that seem repeatedly to recur around this MSA passage, in order to be able to examine the genuine corporeal implications of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* in a manner free from the possible distraction it represents.

[2472] See §1.3.7.

5.2.3 *Āśrayaparāvṛtti* as change of physical sex

The first genuine, clearly corporeal implication of the term *āśrayaparāvṛtti* that we will examine is found in the fact that it has sometimes been thought to derive from a Vinaya context, in which it refers to a physical transformation of an individual from one sex to another. MSA 11.4 lists various categories in terms of which one is to understand the term *vinaya* ("discipline"). Among the categories used in this highly stylised analysis is "absolution" (*niḥsṛti;* "expiation", "release", "atonement" etc.), and in commenting on this category, the *Bhāṣya* lists various ways in which a monastic might be released from culpability for an infraction against the monastic rule. Among these is "transformation of the basis" (*āśrayaparivṛtti*), which in this case clearly refers to a physical change of sex: the *Bhāṣya* glosses it as "resulting from the change of the masculine or feminine sex organs of a monk or nun, in a case when the offence is not common (for both monks and nuns)."[2473] In other words, if an individual commits an offence which is only an offence for a nun, and then transforms into a man, they are released from culpability for their offence; so also for the reverse case.

This same conception of *āśrayaparivṛtti* (after Ch. *zhuanyi;* Tib. here is *lus gyur pa,* "transformation of the body") is also found in the *Viniścayasaṃgrahaṇī* of the *Yogācārabhūmi*, in a similar context speaking of "exculpation" (出罪, *ltung ba las bslang ba*).[2474]

[2473] *āpatter utthānâd vyutthānān niḥsṛteś ca viniyatvaṃ/ pudgalataḥ prajñapteḥ pravibhāgaviniścayāc caiva//* MSA 9.4; Bh: *āśrayaparivṛttir bhokṣubhikṣuṇyoḥ strīpuruṣavyañjanaparivartanād asādhāraṇā vedâpattiḥ;* Lévi I, 54-55. Thurman et al. 114-115; Lévi II, 100-101.

[2474] Sakuma, *Theorie* II, 180-181; YBh also envisages cases in which the offender transforms to have "other marks (餘形, i.e. other sex organs)" or a body without any gender at all: 依轉故者。謂轉捨苾芻依轉得苾芻尼依。或轉捨苾芻尼依轉得苾芻依。爾時苾芻苾芻尼各所犯罪。或轉餘形或轉無形, T1579.676b13-16; *de la lus gyur pa las ni 'di lta ste/ dge slong gi lus spangs mas/ dge slong ma'i lus su gyur pa'am/ dge slong ma'i lus spangs nas dge slong gi lus su gyur pa'am/ de bshin du dge slong dang/ dge slong ma gnyi ga'i lus spangs nas/ de las gshan pa'i mtshan du gyur pa'am/ mtshan med par gyur pa las so//* Sakuma suggests, 182 n. 961, that this may mean hermaphrodism, citing Dunlun.

These two passages are the only instances I know of in which the term *āśrayaparāvṛtti* refers to the transformation of the sexual organ. Nonetheless, seemingly on the basis of one or the other of these passages (and especially the MSA passage), some scholars have thought that they indicate that the term *āśrayaparāvṛtti* originates in a Vinaya use, and was only adapted by Yogācāra to the more famous sense it finds in that school.[2475] I do not think that the evidence warrants such a conclusion, and prefer to think, with Sakuma, that the term most likely originates within the Yogācāra fold itself. Nonetheless, I do think it is significant that the term was thought amenable to this use – it shows, I believe, that *āśraya* was thought to refer in the first instance to the body, so that a physical change of sex could naturally be referred to by the term "transformation of the *āśraya*". This supposedly Vinaya usage is therefore one more piece of evidence that *āśrayaparāvṛtti* is consistently associated with questions of embodiment.

5.2.4 The notion of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* in select Sarvâstivāda Abhidharma passages

In his dissertation on *āśrayaparāvṛtti,* Davidson has surveyed "Vaibhāṣika/Sautrāntika" materials in which the concept features.[2476] He concludes, rightly I believe, that the concept does not originate with the Abhidharma. In fact, none of the passages cited can be clearly shown to be earlier than early Yogācāra sources for the same concept, as Sakuma emphasises.

[2475] Several scholars refer us for the sources of this notion to a note by Lamotte in his *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa,* 280-281 n. 37. Even the erudite Lamotte, however, can cite only this passage for the notion of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* in this sense. Otherwise, he provides canonical references for the prejudice against the spiritual capacities of women; instances from Buddhist "folklore" in which changes of sex are said to have indeed taken place; Vinaya questions raised by the possibility of sex change as treated in AKBh; transformation of females into male *bodhisattvas* in Mahāyāna *sūtras.* Nonetheless, he seems to imply that the term originated in this sense, and was *adapted* to its Yogācāra use: "Dans le systeme Yogācāra, l'expression *āśrayaparāvṛtti a pris un sense philosophique* et désigne la révolution du support . . ."

[2476] Davidson, diss. 160-171. This chapter is called "Vaibhāṣika/Sautrāntika Sources", a title which is somewhat misleading, since Davidson does not mean by it that the concept originates in the Abhidharma, 167; he clearly means by it merely textual sources belonging to those schools in which the concept is found.

The passages that follow are incidentally worth surveying, in addition to what they show us about corporeal dimensions of *āśrayaparāvṛtti*, because if it is true that the concept does not originate in Abhidharma, then this is another significant instance of a concept from a Mahāyāna context being (in this case very swiftly) taken up by "Mainstream schools", a phenomenon we have also had occasion to suspect is at work in the Sarvâstivāda Abhidharma discourse of *buddhakāya* as a whole; it therefore provides important independent corroboration of the plausibility of that scenario.[2477]

The primary interest of passages like those that follow for our present purposes, however, is that they strengthen from another angle my basic contention that there is a persistent recurring link between *āśrayaparāvṛtti* and the problematic of embodiment. In what follows, therefore, I will highlight the corporeal dimensions of the understanding of *āśraya* and *āśrayaparāvṛtti* that are prominent in them.

In fact, it seems that passages in which the term occurs that are apparently or possibly earlier than the *Abhidharmakośa* are red herrings. Davidson cites a passage from the **Mahāvibhāṣā* which also appears to use the term *āśrayaparāvṛtti,*[2478] to which Sakuma adds a parallel from the *Abhidharmakośa* which escaped Davidson's notice.[2479] Both authors agree, however, that the

[2477] It is perhaps notable, in this connection, that in his recent study of influence from YBh detectable in AKBh, Robert Kritzer does not identify *āśrayaparāvṛtti* as one of the themes where this influence is felt, even where he discusses Bh to precisely one of the verse at issue here; 110-111. See, however, 202-203 on one (to my eye, slight) resemblance between AKBh 4.15 and YBh (*Viniścayasaṃgrahaṇī*) on the relation between *āśraya/āśrayaparāvṛtti* and the path. It is possible, of course, that in this, Kritzer is merely exercising a sensible conservatism with regard to a doctrine the relative chronology of which cannot be determined with absolute certainty. However, these passages, read in light of Sakuma's findings, surely at least suggest that the echoes of Yogācāra *āśraya* and *āśrayaparāvṛtti* theory are yet another respect in which AKBh seems to have been shaped by and accepted YBh doctrine.

[2478] Davidson diss. 160.

[2479] Sakuma, *Theorie* I, 8; 40 n. 127.

term here has a different meaning to *āśrayaparāvṛtti* in the sense that concerns us here. Another candidate Davidson scrutinises[2480] as possible evidence of an Abhidharma antecedent for the notion is a passage in the **Saṃyuktâbhidharmahṛdaya*[2481] attributed to Dharmatrāta. However, while the use of the term *zhuanyi* = *āśrayaparāvṛtti* in this passage is indeed apparently compatible with Yogācāra uses, it cannot be shown that it clearly predates the *Yogācārabhūmi,* in particular, where the earliest Yogācāra uses seem to be found.[2482] It is thus just as likely, especially given the fact that the term is apparently otherwise unique in the Abhidharma literature, that we have here another instance of permeability of "Mainstream" schools texts to influence in the direction opposite to what is usually assumed, and that the term found its way into Dharmatrāta *from* a (proto-)Yogācāra context.[2483] In any case, too little is said about *āśrayaparāvṛtti* in this passage for us to know much about what it means, other than that it is associated with the extirpation of the *kleśas* ("defilements").

[2480] Davidson, diss. 161.

[2481] The reconstruction of this title is a matter of dispute; see e.g. Sakuma, *Theorie* 40 n. 128, who provides references to other sources. I here provisionally follow Bart Dessein, who has made a full study and translation of the text.

[2482] The *Saṃyuktâbhidharmahṛdaya* most likely dates at the earliest from the early fourth century; the *terminus ad quem,* from the Chinese translation, is 435 CE.

[2483] The passage in question merely lists five ways in which *kleśas* are eliminated: 復次五事斷煩惱。謂因永滅。得斷。轉依 (*āśrayaparāvṛtti*)。知緣。得對治。已說斷煩惱因緣建立。斷知今當說 T1552.906a18-20. "Furthermore, there are five things that abandon defilement: the cause that has disappeared eternally, acquisition of annihilation, moving the basis, thorough knowledge of the supporting object and genesis of antidote." Dessein I, 293. Dessein provides the equivalent *āśrayaparāvṛtti* for 轉依 II, 244 n. 628, without going into any exploration of the historical and doctrinal problems this might raise. This passage is also discussed in Sakuma 39-41, where he agrees that the Chinese refers to *āśrayaparāvṛtti*. Dessein states that the author, Dharmatrāta, was most likely an uncle of the Bhadanta Vasumitra, but follows his ideas; he assigns this individual a date in the early fourth century on the basis of a Chinese preface by Jiaojing to the 425 translation of the *Saṃyuktâbhidharmahṛdaya*; I, xxiii. Thus, at best, we have here a work closely contemporaneous with the earliest Yogācāra texts, and nothing to establish an Abhidharma "origin" to the term. This problem is discussed by Sakuma, *Theorie* I, 41, where he adds the additional reasons for doubting it can predate Yogācāra contexts in which the notion is found that the crucial passage is missing from other versions of the same text, viz. T1550 and 1551.

Thus, it seems, the earliest significant source for the concepts of *āśraya* and *āśrayaparāvṛtti* in the context of the Sarvâstivāda Abhidharma is the *Abhidharmakośa* and *Bhāṣya,* and it is to that text that we now turn.

Sakuma has directed our attention to two passages in *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* (AKBh) in which the discussion seems related to *āśrayaparāvṛtti.*[2484] The first of these passages[2485] occurs at Bh to 2.36:

> "[The difference between abandonment and non-abandonment of the *kleśas*] consists in a difference in the 'basis' (*āśraya*). In the Noble Ones (*āryas*), the basis is radically transformed by the power of the [twofold] path consisting in insight [into truth] and intensive cultivation [of that truth] (*darśanabhāvanāmārga*); defilements that have been abandoned by that [power of the path] cannot take root any more. Just as in [the case of] a [grain of] rice burnt by fire, we say of the defilements in the case of a basis (*āśraya*) purged of 'seeds' (*abījībhūta*) that they are 'abandoned defilements' (*prahīṇakleśa*)."[2486]

This passage clearly refers to a revolutionary transformation of the basis which entails the permanent destruction of all *kleśas* and therefore the attainment of full Arhatship. However, the only hint as to the nature or identity of the "basis" (*āśraya*) itself is the talk of "seeds". It would take us too far astray here to enter into detailed discussion of the Sarvâstivāda doctrine of seeds, but we can at least note that Yaśomitra here glosses *āśrayaviśeṣād,* "because of a difference in basis", by *ātmabhāvaviśeṣād,* "because of a different in body". Thus, at least on Yaśomitra's reading, the text is clearly discussing an *āśrayaparāvṛtti* that is bodily in nature.

2484 *Sakuma, Theorie* 42-45.

2485 Also noted in Davidson, diss. 167-168.

2486 Shastri 215: *āśrayaviśeṣād etat sidhyati. āśrayo hi sa āryāṇāṃ darśanabhāvanāmārgasāmarthyāt tathā parāvṛtto bhavati, yathā na punas tatpraheyāṇāṃ kleśānāṃ prarohasamartho bhavati. ato 'gnidagdhabrīhi*[=*vrīhi*?]*vad abījībhūte āśraye kleśānāṃ prahīṇakleśa ity ucyate.* VP AKBh I, 183.

This is also the case in the second of Sakuma's passages, which is also discussed by Davidson,[2487] and is found in AKBh to 4.56. Here, however, we get greater detail. In this passage, the text discusses the idea that good and bad acts performed towards persons arisen from five states, viz. *nirodhasamāpatti, araṇāsamāpatti, maitrībhāvanā,* entry into the *darśanamārga* and the attainment of *arhatphala,* will receive the rewards of those acts in this life. Bh, discussing the last of these two categories, explains that in each case, the continuum of the person (*saṃtati*) is purified; this purification is brought about by the transformation (or renewal, or complete replacement; *parivṛtti*) of the *pratyagrâśraya* or "brand new body ("basis, support")".[2488] Particularly noteworthy for us here is that Yaśomitra, in commenting on this passage, glosses *pratyagrâśraya* as *abhinavaśarīra,* "a fresh, new body".[2489] In other words, though the actual term *āśrayaparivṛtti* occurs nowhere in this exact combination, it seems clear that in Yaśomitra's interpretation, at least, AKBh is proposing a model whereby entry into the *darśanamārga* or attainment of *arhatphala* is attended by a radical renewal of the body, in which the body is referred to as *āśraya* and that renewal is *parivṛtti.*

In this same connection, it is further relevant to note, with Davidson,[2490] that AKBh elsewhere also offers definitions of *āśraya* in terms of the body. First, at Bh to AK 3.41ab:

[2487] Davidson, diss. 161.

[2488] AKBh, VP III, 123. *darśanamārgavyutthitasyāśeṣadarśanaprahātavyaprahāṇāt pratyagrāśrayaparivṛttinirmalā saṃtatir vartate. arhatphalavyutthitasyāśeṣabhāvanāprahātavyaprahāṇāt pratyagrāśrayaparivṛttiśuddhā saṃtatir vartate.* Note that in explaining why actions directed at persons risen from these attainments reap immediate rewards in this lifetime, but not actions directed towards the *sakṛdāgāmin* and the *anāgāmin,* the text further characterises persons arisen from states of entry to the *darśanamārga* and *arhatphala* as "fields of merit" (*puṇyakṣetra*); VP III, 124. Yaśomitra further echoes this connection; Davidson 163. This raises the possibility that a person's status as a "field of merit" might be linked to aspects of their corporeal state, a possibility to which I will return (in a very speculative mode) in the Conclusion to this dissertation below, §6.2.8.

[2489] Davidson, diss. 162.

[2490] Davidson, diss. 163-164.

> "The basis (*āśraya*) is the body (*kāya*) with all of its sense faculties, and 'sustenance in mouthfuls' [*kavaḍīkārāhārāḥ,* i.e. material physical food] is to its increase; that which is based [upon the body as basis] is mind and mental events (*citta-caittāḥ*), and to their increase is '[sense-]contact' [which is likewise regarded as a kind of 'sustenance']."[2491]

It is clear, in this passage, that Yaśomitra's gloss elsewhere of *āśraya* by *ātmabhāva* "body" is in keeping with the understanding of Vasubandhu himself, and that the term does indeed, for AKBh, refer to the body (*kāya*).[2492]

Davidson notes further that there is a different definition of *āśraya* implied at AKBh to 1.20.[2493] The text is explaining the use of the term *dhātu* (in the context of the eighteen *dhātu*) and says that it means *gotra* "element", whereon it says further, "Just as in a single mountain there may be said [to be] such diverse elements as iron, copper, silver, and gold, etc., so in a single base (*āśraya*) or continuum (*santāna*) it is said that [there are] eighteen elements (*gotra*), that is, eighteen *dhātu*."[2494] The point for our purposes here is that, as Davidson notes, *āśraya* here is used in a more encompassing sense that covers all eighteen *dhātu* in whose terms the phenomenal person is analysed (which, let it be remembered, include not only the body with its sense organs but also their objects and the respective "consciousnesses" or moments of mind associated with each), and not only in the more restrictive terms of the physical body alone. Significantly, however, Yaśomitra, as in the previous definition, applies the term *śarīra* to this understanding also, nonetheless, saying that it signifies "the body in the totality of its

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[2491] Shastri 496: *āśrayo 'ti sêndriyaḥ kāyaḥ. tasya puṣṭaye kavaḍīkārāhārāḥ. āśritāś cittacaittās teṣāṃ puṣṭaye sparśaḥ, .* VP AKBh II, 126.

[2492] Another reason this definition is noteworthy is that it recalls the definition of "support" and "the supported" in terms of the body and mind and associated *dharmas,* respectively, which we already observed at work in §4.4.5 above, in the **Mahāvibhāṣā* passage that discussed the corporeal interpretation of *sôpadhi-* and *nirupadhiśeṣanirvānadhātu* at such remarkable length.

[2493] Davidson, diss. 164. See VP AKBh I, 37; Shastri 59.

[2494] *gotrārtho dhātvarthaḥ. yathaikasmin parvate bahūny ayastāmrarūpyasuvarṇādigotrāṇi dhātava ucyante evam ekasminn āśraye santāne vā aṣṭādaśa gotrāṇi aṣṭādaśa dhātava ucyante.*

characteristics/defining features" (*samudāya-lakṣaṇa-śarīra*). This points in the direction of an understanding of "body" and "embodiment" that I have had occasion to mention in passing elsewhere in this study, but which I have been unable to develop fully: that embodiment is understood to refer not just to the indwelling or investment of the "person" embodied (whatever that might be in Buddhism) in the physical body *per se,* but that we are understood to be "embodied" in aspects of mind also, such that e.g. all five members of the *skandha* analysis, or here, all eighteen members of the *dhātu* analysis of personal being and experience are included under the head of "body". Once more, I cannot enter into the substantiation of this reading, which would require detailed anlaysis and argument, but suffice it to say, for our present purposes, that it is clear that AKBh (once more, on Yaśomitra's reading) understands *āśraya* in corporeal terms, *and* (*pace* Davidson's apparent understanding that these are mutually exclusive possibilities) that it understands it in terms of the whole manifold embraced by the *dhātu* schema.

Thus, it seems clear that by the time of Vasubandhu at the latest, the Sarvâstivāda Abhidharma understood *āśraya* primarily with reference to the body, in the context of a theory of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* that is fundamentally compatible with at least some versions of the Yogācāra theory (as we will see in more detail in passages examined below). This presents us with corroboration from another quarter of the basic contention of this section of this dissertation, namely that the problematic of embodiment is in fact the primary point of reference for the bulk of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* doctrine.

5.2.5. *Āśraya* as the six (internal) *āyatana*

Another interpretation of *āśraya* understands that it refers to the "six (internal) bases" or sense-organs, viz. the organs of sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch, in addition to the mind

as the "organ" that perceives mental objects. I contend that this interpretation is also basically corporeal. These organs are called "bases", of course, when they are considered as part of the overall rubric of the twelvefold analysis of personal experience in terms of "bases" (*āyatana*).[2495] Because this model includes the mind as a sense-organ, it is clear, once more, that as with the fivefold *skandha* analysis, we must adopt an expanded definition of "body" or "embodiment" to mean something like a psychophysical being (cf. *nāmarūpa*) in which the "person" is embodied, in order to include it under the head of corporeal interpretations of *āśraya*. However, it is also arguable that this model of the person, perhaps even more than the *skandha* analysis, is centred in the physical body (as a manifold of physical sensation).

According to Sakuma, *āśraya* is taken to mean the six (internal) sense-organs (*ṣaḍāyatana*) in both the older parts of the *Yogācārabhūmi* (YBh) and in the *Vastusaṃgrahaṇī* of the same text.[2496]

As a first example of this interpretation of the concept, let us take the passage from the *Vastusaṃgrahaṇī* identified by Sakuma. I translate primary from Xuanzang's Chinese:[2497]

> "At such time as right view arises, due to the external force of the hearing of the true *dharma* and the internal force of rational thinking and repeated diligent reflection; then, because of the arising of right view, ignorance is severed, and knowledge is produced. In the *dharma* that is so manifested, the six bases (*ṣaḍāyatana*) which are accompanied by elements of ignorance (*avidyādhātu*) are eliminated and extinguished, and [in their place] the six bases accompanied by elements of knowledge (*vidyādhātu*) are produced: this is called 'the revolution of the basis' (名爲轉依),[2498] because all badness (*dauṣṭhulya*) is eliminated therein. Because the six bases (*ṣaḍāyatana*) cease, [the members of the

[2495] This rubric also includes, as the opposite numbers to these "internal" bases, the "external" bases of the respective objects of each sense (including mental objects, *dharma,* as the sixth such object, apprehended by the sense-organ of the mind).

[2496] Sakuma, *Theorie* I, 166. I cannot find the "older" parts of YBh to which Sakuma refers here; he does not seem to mention it, for instance, in the portion of his "Studie" that treats this *Vastusaṃgrahaṇī* passage (as a precedent to the notion of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* found therein), I, 153-156.

[2497] Sakuma, *Theorie* II, 206-208.

[2498] Tibetan here reads rather "the basis undergoes a revolution . . . " (*gnas yongs su gyur cing*).

> twelvefold *pratītyasamutpāda*] also cease in sequence up to 'craving' (愛, *tṛṣṇā*). Because craving ceases, the 'sustenances' [of further existence] (諸食, *āhāra*) also cease, and the various *dharmas* that grasp at future existence also cease, and thus, it should be known, future existence also ceases. For this reason, it is clear that one possessed of knowledge does not seek future existence (?)."[2499]

It is clear that the "basis" here refers to the six sense-organs; that the process of *āśrayaparāvṛtti,* accompanying the arising of correct view and culminating in the cessation of all future existence (i.e. release from *saṃsāra,* complete liberation), and entailing the elimination of all "badness" (*dauṣṭhulya*), involves the elimination of these six bases and their replacement by a radically different manifold. It is also clear that the replacement *āśraya* is also a (new kind of) sixfold sense-manifold, and that the key difference between the two states ("pre-" and "post-enlightenment", if we like) is gnostic, in that the first set seems to be comprised of the six sense-organs regarded in the light of wrongheaded ideas, and the second set is regarded in the light of (correct) knowledge and the true *dharma.* Finally, it is also clear that the process of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* is not merely an ancillary concomitant to the process of liberation, but a key link in a causal chain that brings it about, itself precipitated by the rise of correct view, and in turn leading to the undoing of the chain of *pratītyasamutpāda* down to the abrogation of future rebirth. It other words, the six sense-bases as *āśraya* here are understood in the context of the twelve *nidānas* of dependent origination, and liberation is understood precisely as liberation *from ongoing embodiment.* We can understand, I think, without reading too much into the passage, that the "right view" is one that clearly sees embodiment, as epitomised in the sixfold

[2499]或復有時聽聞正法爲外支力。如理作意正勤修習爲內支力。由是因緣正見生起。正見生故能斷無明能生於明。彼現法中諸無明界所隨六處皆得除滅。明界所隨六處得生。名爲轉依。彼品麁重皆止息故。六處既滅漸次乃至愛亦隨滅。由愛滅故。諸食亦滅。能取後有諸法滅故當知後有亦復隨滅。是故應知處於明者不求後有, T1579.839a25-b04; I have repunctuated after Sakuma, with one exception where I disagree with his reading, which will be apparent from a comparison of his translation with mine. Tib. from Sakuma: *gang gi tshe phyi rol gyi yan lag gi stobs dam pa'i chos thos pa la brten nas/ nang gi tshul bshin yid la byed pa'i rgyus yang dag pa'i lta ba skyed de/ des na ma rig pa spong la rig pa ni skyed do// gnas yongs su gyur cing de'i nang gi gnas ngan len shin tu sbyangs pa'i phyir/ tshe 'di la de'i ma rig pa'i khams dang ldan pa'i skye mched drug gang yin pa de ni 'gag la rig pa'i khams dang ldan pa ni skye'o// de'i skye mched drug 'gags pas rim gyis sred pa'i bar du 'gag par 'gyur ro// sred pa 'gags pas zas 'gag par 'gyur ro// yang srid par skye ba la phan 'dogs pa'i zas rnams 'gags nas kyang rig pa dang ldan shing 'byung ba mi tshol ba de'i yang srid par skye ba 'gag par 'gyur bar rig par bya'o//*

āyatana model, as nothing desirable, so that craving for it ceases, etc., and on down to complete disengagement from the snare of becoming. Thus, *āśrayaparāvṛtti* here, too, is primarily a change in the mode of embodiment, that is, a corporeal matter.

The term *āśrayaparāvṛtti* also has the meaning of the six internal sense-bases in the "Nirvāṇa Chapter" of the *Viniścayasaṃgrahaṇī.*[2500] The text begins by asking rhetorically what could be meant by *āśrayaparāvṛtti* if, in the Arhat, the six sense-organs (*ṣaḍāyatana*) continue to function just as before, and how, if this is the case, it can be true that the *kleśas* no longer function, and only the constituents of the Noble Path do.[2501] The text avers that it is of course the case that there is *āśrayaparāvṛtti* for the Arhat, but that *āśrayaparāvṛtti* can neither be said to be identical to the six sense bases nor different from them – the question itself is not well-formed (非如理問, *dri ba . . . tshul bzhin ma yin pa, *ayoniśa*), because *āśrayaparāvṛtti* is manifested (XZ 顯, Tib. *rab du phye ba, *prabhāvita,* for which Schmithausen has "constituted"[2502]) by the purification of Thusness (*tathatā-viśuddhi*), and, it seems, because the relation between Thusness and phenomenal reality similarly cannot be said to be a relation of either identity or difference. (We will return to the definition of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* as the purification of Thusness below.)

Thus, while the "Nirvāṇa Chapter" shares with the *Vastusaṃgrahaṇī* passage already examined above an understanding of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* in terms of a transformation of the (relation to the) six senses, we also see that the understanding of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* in these two passages is by no means identical, but rather, that in the "Nirvāṇa Chapter" (which Sakuma places later in his relative chronology of the internal strata of YBh as a whole), there is an important shift

[2500] §§I.3.A-B, I.5-8, Schmithausen, *Nirvāṇa-Abschnitt* 43-53; Davidson, diss. 183-185.

[2501] §I.3.A, Schmithausen, *Nirvāṇa-Abschnitt* 42, 43; T1579.747c17-21.

[2502] On *pra/bhū,* see n. 1522.

towards the definition of the resultant state in terms of what I call in this study the Mahāyāna "absolute". This is an important theme in the overall range of interpretations of *āśrayaparāvṛtti,* and one to which we will return below. Nonetheless, we also see that this understanding of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* as a particular relation to the absolute, that is, as purification of *tathatā,* is maintained in tandem with an understanding which remains clearly corporeal. To anticipate my argument somewhat, I will contend below that the overall contours of the *āśrayaparāvṛtti* problematic are epitomised in this passage, and that in the larger picture, also, *āśrayaparāvṛtti* keeps its roots in the corporeal even in interpretations that apparently depart most radically from it, and take on the most apparently ethereal or abstract overtones.

To enter into the details of this point here, however, would be to get ahead of myself. I will turn to those portions of the "Nirvāṇa Chapter", which begin to bear on what I call "ideal" embodiments insofar as they envisage an *āśrayaparāvṛtti* resulting in embodiment in the absolute, in §5.2.8 below. In the meantime, I must first continue my examination of the range of connections between *āśrayaparāvṛtti* with two conceptions that begin to tend in the direction of more ideal embodiments, since they bear on mastery over one's own lifespan and the elaboration of the *manomayakāya.*

5.2.6 *Āśrayapariśuddhi* ("purification of the basis") and mastery over lifespan in the *Bodhisattvabhūmi* of YBh

The final chapter (*Pratiṣṭhā-paṭala*) of the *Bodhisattvabhūmi* (of the *Yogācārabhūmi*) proposes a link between the transformation of the *āśraya* and mastery over lifespan.

> "In what consists the purification of the basis (*āśrayapariśuddhi*[2503])? [It consists in that] the basis of badness, characterised by all things associated with defilement and including the habitual tendencies arising from intentional action (*vāsanā*), disappears

[2503] *pariśuddhi* Wogihara; Sakuma has only *-śuddhiḥ,* and in an fn. gives Dutt –*viśuddhi.*

> without remainder, [and that the practitioner attains] the power in all respects to survive or die at will with regard to his own body (*sve ātmabhāve*); this is what is called 'purification of the basis'."[2504]

The relevance of this passage here is that, as I have argued elsewhere in this dissertation, physical death is, from the very earliest part of the canon, one of the most pertinent respects in which the given physical body is inadequate and a locus of suffering, and therefore to be transcended, so that "the undying" is consistently presented as one major characterisation of the religious ideal (Chapter 2.2). Further, as we have also seen already (in Chapter 5.1 immediately preceding this section of this dissertation), the notion of vanquishing death was developed in the period from the early post-Pāli-canonical period through to the fourth century into a doctrine that the Buddha, in particular, is immortal, and that his ideal embodiments have associated special characteristics, including primarily adamantine durability and permanence. If we thus now find, in YBh – another text of the fourth century – that the transformation of the *āśraya*[2505] brings mastery over physical lifespan, then to my mind at least, that constitutes another sense in which *āśraya* and its transformation are linked to embodiment, and indeed, perhaps the most rudimentary or qualified sense in which it begins to shade out of the ideas about ordinary given embodiment we have examined thus far in this section, and move towards ideas about states of embodiment that more closely approach a liberatory ideal.

[2504] *tatrâśrayaśuddhiḥ katamā. savāsanānāṃ sarvakleśapakṣyāṇāṃ dauṣṭhulyānām āśrayān niravaśeṣato 'tyaṇtaṃ uparamaḥ sve câtmabhāve yathākāmam ādānasthānacyutiṣu vaśavartitā sarvākārā āśrayaśuddhir ity ucyate*; Sakuma, *Theorie* II, 150-151, cf. Wogihara BBh 384. Davidson discusses this passage, diss. 185.

[2505] Further on connections between *āśrayapariśuddhi* and *āśrayaparāvṛtti,* see Sakuma, *Theorie* I, 166 (referring to the *Śrutamayī-bhūmi, Manobhūmi* etc.

5.2.7 Attainment of the *manomayakāya* with *parāvṛtti* in the *Laṃkāvatāra-sūtra*

Another unusual connection between *parāvṛtti* and notions of embodiment (like so many unusual things!) is found in the *Laṃkâvatāra-sūtra* (LAS),[2506] where it turns out that *parāvṛtti* entails the attainment of the "body made of mind" (*manomayakāya*):

> "Establishing themselves at the eight stage[2507] [of the *bodhisattva* path, *bodhisattvas*] they will undergo a revolutionary transformation in their mind (*citta*), their egoistic consciousness (*manas*) and their mental organ (*manovijñāna*), in the five *dharmas,* the [three] natures, and the twofold absence of essence, and thereby will obtain the body made of mind (*manomayakāya*)."[2508]

A more extended version of the same doctrine follows elsewhere in the text, as part of a complicated doctrine of three kinds of *manomayakāya.* It turns out that the *manomayakāya* that is elaborated at the moment of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* is a *particular kind* of *manomayakāya,* born of the recognition of the true nature of *dharmas*:

> "What is the *manomayakāya* [born of the] recognition of the true nature of *dharmas*? We call *manomayakāya* [in this sense] the body that exhibits various powers, that is like a flower (?), that is in accordance with whatever wish arises in the mind, that is like a mirage, a dream or a reflected image, that is immaterial (*abhautika*) and yet like unto [a body made of] real material elements, that is furnished with all the various members and yet can enter into the assemblies of all the Buddha-fields; [so we call such a body,] which arises in one whose basis of mind has been radically transformed (*cittâśrayaparāvṛtta*) by means of the realisation that *dharmas* are mere appearances like a mirage, etc. at the eighth stage of the [*bodhisattva*] path, because of the attainment of the *samādhi* that is like a mirage (*māyôpamasamādhi*) and other kinds of *samādhi.* [We call it thus] because of the fact that it enters into an understanding of the true nature of all *dharmas*."[2509]

[2506] We already had occasion to note these passages briefly above p. 281.

[2507] Note that, in contrast, *āśrayaparāvṛtti* is defined as pertaining to the first stage of the *bodhisattva* path at MSA 14.29; Lévi I, 94, II, 168; Thurman et al., 181. This throws something of a spanner in the works of Bagchi's attempt to use the LSA theory of stages and their relation to *āśrayaparāvṛtti* to interpret MSA 11.46, as already noted above, n. 2466.

[2508] *aṣṭamyāṃ bhūmau sthitāḥ citta-mano-manovijñāna-pañcadharma-svabhāvanairātmya-dvayagati-parāvṛtty-adhigamān manomayakāyaṃ pratilabhante //,* Nanjio 81, Suzuki 71. Translation modified.

[2509] Nanjio 137, Suzuki 119: *tatra dharmasvabhāvāvabodhamanomayaḥ kāyaḥ katamaḥ. yad uta aṣṭamyāṃ bhūmau māyādidharmanirābhāsapravicayāvabodhena cittāśrayaparāvṛttasya māyopamasamādhipratilambhād anyeṣāṃ ca samādhimukhānāṃ pratilambhād anekalakṣaṇavaśitābhijñākusumitaṃ manojavasadṛśaṃ māyāsvapnabimbaprakhyam abhautikaṃ bhūtabhautikasadṛśaṃ sarvarūpavicitrāṅgasamuditaṃ sarvabuddhakṣetraparṣanmaṇḍalānugataṃ kāyaṃ dharmasvabhāvagatiṃgatatvān manomaya ity ucyate.*

This unusual doctrine of a *manomayakāya* that attends *āśrayaparāvṛtti* confirms from yet another angle the contention that *parāvṛtti* is a transformation in the state of embodiment. We should note, of course, that the term *āśraya* is not explicitly used here; by implication, however, what undergoes transformation is the Yogācāra manifold of consciousnesses and associated aspects of experience,[2510] so that the term *āśraya* here implicitly receives a relatively non-corporeal interpretation. However, I will argue below that even the apparently most non-corporeal interpretations of *āśraya* as the starting point of the transformation must still be understood within the overall framework of a primarily corporeal set of terms of reference.

Thus far, we have examined a range of connections in which the term *āśraya,* as it enters into the term *āśrayaparāvṛtti,* refers to the body in several different senses or under the aegis of different analyses: the body as a sexed organism, in Vinaya-like passages relating to the sex change as a way of escaping culpability for monastic infractions; the body simply named as such, that is, as *kāya, ātmabhāva* etc. in the Abhidharma; the body understood in terms of the six sense bases; the body implied in the fact that *āśrayaparāvṛtti* gives command over physical lifespan; and the special kind of body "made of mind". At its tail end the spectrum of embodiments discussed so far begins to move in the direction of more ideal modes of embodiment. However, the centre of gravity in discussion of embodiment thus far has been in given, ordinary, inadequate embodiment as a site of suffering. We now turn in the direction of embodiments that correspond in various ways to the Buddhist liberatory ideal, beginning with a connection between *āśrayaparāvṛtti* and embodiment that sits right on the dividing line between given and ideal, in a sense, since it conceives of the given body from the special perspectives of persons who have realised the ideal – *sôpadhiśeṣa* and *nirupadhiśeṣanirvāṇadhātu*.

[2510] As is quite consistently the case elsewhere in LAS; see below, n. 2565.

It thus serves my exposition as a kind of hinge upon which turns the connection between *āśraya* as referring to ordinary embodiment and the *parāvṛttâśraya* ("radically transformed basis") as referring to much more ideal embodiments. In the course of the discussion of this next category, we will also have occasion to broach the first of a range of senses in which *āśrayaparāvṛtti* theory is discussed in terms of the Buddhist "absolute" as the true *āśraya* (a relation to) which results from *parāvṛtti,* namely *āśraya* understood as Thusness (*tathatā*).

5.2.8 *Āśrayaparāvṛtti* and the corporeal reading of *sôpadhiśeṣa-* and *nirupadhiśeṣanirvāṇadhātu*

In addition to the passages cited above (in §5.2.5) showing that it conceives of the given *āśraya* that is the starting point of transformation in terms of the six bases, the "Nirvāṇa Chapter" of YBh can also serve us as a useful example of another dimension of the corporeal ramifications of *āśrayaparāvṛtti,* because it shows yet another link between *āśrayaparāvṛtti* and material we will recognise from elsewhere in the present study as intimately linked to the problematic of given and ideal embodiments: the "corporeal" interpretation of *sôpadhiśeṣa-* and *nirupadhiśeṣanirvāṇadhātu*. The examination of this dimension of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* in the "Nirvāṇa Chapter" thus enables us to continue building on our theme of the overall range of corporeal associations found in the complex of ideas associated with *āśrayaparāvṛtti,* and it is therefore to that aspect of the Chapter that we now turn.

We have already had occasion to note, in the course of other parts of the present study, that the terms *saupādisesa* and *anupādisesa* (in Pāli) originally seem to have meant "with a remainder of attachment" and "without ~", with no particular corporeal overtones, and yet that over time, the distinction between these two terms underwent a fundamental reworking that saw them come to take on the (now) more familiar meaning of two kinds of "*nirvāṇa* element/realm" (*nirvāṇadhātu*): one in which a person had attained *nirvāṇa* but lived on in their last physical

body, and the other in which a similarly liberated person had also physically died (Chapter 3.4). We also saw (§4.4.5) that in the Sarvâstivāda Abhidharma as represented by the **Mahāvibhāṣā,* this pair of concepts, in the later corporeal reinterpretation, was already the topic of complex controversies, and that it had entered into complex relations with a nascent doctrine of types of bodies ascribable to the Buddha (especially the "body of birth", **saṃbhavakāya, *sāṃbhavikakāya*). I argued there that the presence of this sophisticated discussion is evidence for dating at least this part of the text to around the fourth century, when it seems, in light of materials surveyed in cursory fashion at the end of Chapter 3.4, that the corporeal reinterpretation of these concepts was on the rise.

As we will now see, the *Yogācārabhūmi,* which dates from roughly the same epoch, also contains an innovative discussion that relates these concepts to *āśrayaparāvṛtti.* Indeed, if, as I am here arguing, *āśrayaparāvṛtti* itself is profitably to be understood in the context of a larger set of doctrines about embodiment; and if, further, as will be one of my main contentions in this dissertation as a whole, these developments are part of a larger, extraordinary upsurge and ferment in creative elaboration of new doctrines of embodiment around the fourth century, then this YBh passage further strengthens the suggestion that these various developments in the doctrine of *sôpadhiśeṣa-* and *nirupadhiśeṣanirvāṇadhātu* were, in the main, creatures of this era.

The passage in question[2511] begins with a technical explanation of the way mind operates in an Arhat already dwelling in the *sôpadhiśeṣanirvāṇadhātu,* in order that the Arhat transition from that state into the *nirupadhiśeṣanirvāṇadhātu.* According to this account, entry into the *nirupadhiśeṣa~* ensues when the Arhat no longer dwells upon the characteristics of things, but

[2511] Note that Davidson also discusses this passage, diss. 186–189.

rather only directs attention to the true, featureless realm/element/dimension (*mtshan ma med pa'i dbyings ba zhig yid la byed cing; *kevalam animittaṃ dhātuṃ manasikaroti*); this results in the cessation of ordinary active consciousness (*pravṛttivijñāna*) so that all that remains is the pure (*viśuddha*), unconditioned (*asaṃskṛta*), taintless (*nirmala*) [*dharma*]*dhātu*. For one who has entered into such a state, it is no longer possible to be reborn in any condition whatsoever, because "this dimension of reality (真界, *dbyings, dhātu,* i.e. the *āśrayaparāvṛtti* belonging to *nirupadhiśeṣa~*) is free of all proliferation of false ideas (*niṣprapañca*), and can only be directly and personally experienced by those who have realised it [for themselves]".[2512]

The text then goes on to enumerate differences between the Arhat in the *sôpadhiśeṣanirvāṇadhātu* and the Arhat in the *nir~*, and among these differences is that "the *āśrayaparāvṛtti* [of the Arhat] dwelling in *sôpadhiśeṣa*[*-nirvāṇadhātu*] is still bound to (共相應, *dang brel ba, *sambaddhā*) the six [internal] bases (*ṣaḍāyatana*), whereas [the *āśrayaparāvṛtti* of the Arhat] dwelling in *nirupadhiśeṣa*[*-nirvāṇadhātu*] is eternally freed from (不相應) [the six internal bases]."[2513] This assertion then occasions a further discussion of the problem of the sense in

[2512] §4.A-B, Schmithausen, *Nirvāṇa-Abschnitt* 46-49: *dgra bcom pa phung po'i lhag ma dang bcas pa'i mya ngan las das pa'i dbyings la gnas pa sems gang la gnas nas phung po'i lhag ma med pa'i mya ngan las das pa'i dbyings su yongs su mya ngan las da zhe na/ smras pa/ mtshan ma thams cad yid la mi byed pas mthsan ma med pa'i dbyings ba zhig yid la byed cing/ rim gyis gog pa la snyoms par jug la/ jug pa'i rnam par shes pa gog par byed cing de'i og tu kun gzhi'i rnam par shes pa'i gnas spong bar byed de/ kun gzhi rnam par shes pa dang/ jug pa'i rnam par shes pa rgyu med pa mi skye bas/ de la dus ma byas pa'i dbyings rnam par dag pa dri ma med pa lus so// dbyings der yongs su mya ngan las das pa ni lha nyid kyi grangs su yang mi gro la/ dri za nyid du yang ma yin . . . mdor bsdud na de ni phyogs bcu'i sems can du gdags pa'i khams thams cad dang gro ba thams cad dang skye gnas thams cad dang . . . sa thams cad pa gang dag yin pa de dag gi grangs su yang mi gro ste/ di ltar dbyings di ni spros pa med pa ste/ grub pa rnams kyi so so rang rig pa dang mthun pa yin pa'i phyir ro//* 問諸阿羅漢住有餘依涅槃界中。住何等心。於無餘依般涅槃界。當般涅槃。答於一切相不復思惟。唯正思惟真無相界。漸入滅定滅轉識等。次異熟識捨所依止。由異熟識無有取故。諸轉識等不復得生。唯餘清淨無爲離垢真法界在。於此界中般涅槃已。不復墮於天龍藥叉。若乾達縛。若緊奈洛。若阿素洛。若人等數。以要言之。所有有情假想施設。遍於十方一切界。一切趣。一切生。一切生類。一切得身。一切勝生。一切地中。非此更復墮在彼數。何以故。由此真界離諸戲論。唯成辦者內自證故, T1579.748a14-26.

[2513] §5.a.A, Schmithausen 48, 49, T1579.748a27-b03. Note that the assertion that this is the difference between *sôpadhi~* and *nir~* implies a mutual commutability between the six bases and the five *skandhas* as embodiment. The other differences are that the Arhat in *sôpadhiśeṣa* can still be assigned to a class of being, and is still vulnerable to suffering (*duḥkha*). The passage quoted reads: 住有餘依。所得轉依猶與

which the Arhat in the condition of the *nirupadhiśeṣanirvāṇadhātu,* not being bound to the six internal bases, can be said to "dwell" or "continue" at all (云何而住, *ji ltar . . . gnas par gyur*). To this, the text effectively answers that the question is based upon a misconception: it assumes that the *āśrayaparāvṛtti* takes the six sense-bases as its cause (六處爲因, *skye mched drug gi rgyu las byung ba, *ṣaḍāyatanahetukā*), whereas in fact, it takes as its cause an intensive practice of the path that takes Thusness as its object (緣真如境修道爲因, *de bzhin nyid la dmigs pa'i lam bsgoms pa'i rgyur las byung ba, *tathatâlambanamārgabhāvanāhetukā*). Thus, the presence or absence of the six sense-bases is absolutely immaterial to this *āśrayaparāvṛtti,* and effects in it no change whatsoever; far less can the destruction of the six sense-bases destroy that *āśrayaparāvṛtti.* The text adds that *āśrayaparāvṛtti* ("this element", 此界, *dbyings de, dhātu*) cannot be destroyed in any case, because it is not something that can be known (所遍知, *yongs shes pas bya ba, *parijñeya*) or renounced.[2514]

The passage then continues further with the discussion of some further technical problems about the *nirupadhiśeṣanirvāṇadhātu* so defined, which need not concern us here. It is worth noting briefly, however, that in the course of these discussions, we are informed that

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六處而共相應。住無餘依永不相應; *phung po'i lhag ma dang bcas pa la gnas pa'i gnas gyur pa ni skye mched drug dang brel pa yin la/ phung po'i lhag ma med pa la gnas pa'i gnas gyur pa ni skye mched drug dang brel pa ma yin no.*

[2514] §5.a.B, Schmithausen 48-51: *gal te phung po'i lhag ma med pa'i ngan las das pa'i dbyings su yongs su mya ngan las das pa'i gnas gyur pa skye mched drug dang brel pa ma yin na/ ji ltar de skye mched drug gi gnas med par gnas par gyur zhe na/ smras pa/ dgra bcom pa'i gnas gyur pa ni skye mched drug gi rgyu las byung ba ma yin gyi/ de bzhin nyid la dmigs pa'i lam bsgoms pa'i rgyu las byung ba yin te/ de'i phyir skye mched drug yod kyang rung/ med kyang rung ste/ gnas gyur pa la ni gzhan du gyur ba nyid kyang re zhig med pa yin na/ nyams par gyur ba lta yod par ga la gyur/ dbyings de ni yongs shes par bya ba dang spang bar bya ba ma yin te/ de'i phyir dgag par bya ba yang ma yin no*; 問若無餘依涅槃界中。已般涅槃所有轉依永與六處不相應者。彼既無有六處所依。云何而住。答非阿羅漢所得轉依六處爲因。然彼唯用緣真如境修道爲因。是故六處若有若無。尚無轉依成變異性。何況殞沒。又復此界非所遍知。非所應斷。故不可滅, T1579.748b04-10.

āśrayaparāvṛtti pertaining to the *nirupadhiśeṣanirvāṇadhātu* is immutable (無動法, *akṣobhyadharma*), eternal (常, *rtag, nityā*), and characterised by well-being (樂, *bde ba, sukha*).[2515]

This complex passage contains much of interest, but I will attempt to restrict myself to those aspects of it that are relevant to the relationship between *āśrayaparāvṛtti* and the problematic of embodiment, which is complex enough. In the following, I depart somewhat from the periphrastic mode in which I have conducted my analysis thus far, and begin to interpret the texts slightly more constructively, in an attempt to begin moving towards the claims about *āśrayaparāvṛtti* that will constitute the substance of my claims in this section, particularly the claim that even those interpretations of *āśraya* which are apparently more metaphysical and abstract are still to be properly understood within the firm context of the problematic of given and ideal embodiments.

We see, first, that the passage concludes by coming back to the problem that engaged the "Nirvāṇa Chapter" in the first passage therefrom, which we examined above (in §5.2.5): the problem of the relationship between the six sense-bases (*ṣaḍāyatana*) and *āśrayaparāvṛtti*. In effect, the question that was posed at the outset of this discussion – what it means to say that the basis (*āśraya*) of the Arhat is radically transformed (*parāvṛtta*) if the six sense-bases continue to function as before – assumes a definition of *āśraya* whereby it refers to the six sense bases, and indeed, I have already adduced that question above as evidence that this definition was current in the context of this text. However, we can also now see why the text holds that to apply this understanding of *āśraya* to the case of the Arhat misunderstands the nature of the

[2515] §6.a-8, Schmithausen 50-55; T1579.748b19-24. Note that these last two qualities are of course among the four "great perfections" that characterise the Tathāgatagarbha (of purity, Self, bliss and permanence: *mahāśubhapāramitā, mahâtmapāramitā, mahāsukhapāramitā, mahānityapāramitā*; 大淨波羅蜜, 大我波羅蜜, 大樂波羅蜜, 大常波羅蜜) in e.g. the *Ratnagotravibhāga* and texts derived therefrom – though it would take us very far afield to pursue the ramifications of this point here!

revolutionary transformation involved in *parāvṛtti*. I believe it is accurate to understand this passage as saying that on a correct understanding, *āśrayaparāvṛtti* means that the body of the six sense-bases are no longer taken as the basis (*āśraya*) of the person, but rather, that Thusness, viz. the purified *dharmadhātu* etc., is taken as (or recognised to in fact be) the basis in its stead.

Here I must pause in my argument for a moment to address certain terminological difficulties. As is the wont of Buddhist discourse (or perhaps necessitated by the very nature of the case itself), our text is at best oblique about the resultant state, and especially about what (who?) is "based" (*āśrita*) upon the basis (*āśraya*) newly taken, or at least recognised,[2516] as the result of this radical transformation. As is so often the case, then, we are confronted here by the central difficulty that all the terms we can deploy in discussing this resultant state are themselves, in their usual uses, understood to be axiomatically entangled in all the problems that constitute the condition of suffering (*duḥkha, saṃsāra*). Thus, it would certainly be possible to argue plausibly, for example, that it is inappropriate to use the term "person" with reference to the Arhat of either *sôpadhiśeṣa-* or *nirupadhiśeṣadhātu,* since a "person" is always by definition the unreal product of *saṃsāric* ignorance; or, similarly, that we cannot use the term "identification" for the relation of the Arhat to Thusness etc. that ensues upon the radical transformation of their "ground" (*āśraya*); or, indeed, speak of a "ground" in their case; or refer to this reconstituted, true *āśraya* as a ground of the Arhat's "being". In order for discussion to proceed in these cases, however, we cannot require that we first develop an adequate terminology – itself an axiomatic impossibility, where the state realised is held to be ineffable and where

[2516] I am here hedging about a difficulty in expressing precisely the fact that it seems that what is revolutionised is not the basis itself – the text emphasises that the true *āśraya,* i.e. Thusness, is permanent, incapable of undergoing any change in and of itself, and even, by implication, beginningless – but the (perceived) relation of the Arhat to his basis. In other words, it seems to me that it is most accurate to say, in this context, not that *āśrayaparāvṛtti* is a "transformation *of the basis*", but that the term is a shorthand for a transformation in the relation of the "person" to both a spurious pretender to the title of "basis" and to the actual true claimant of that title. As this formulation shows, however, I find it difficult to express this precise understanding succinctly.

language by its very nature is held to be radically inadequate and constitutive of the existential problem – but must rather proceed, *bricoleur* fashion, with these admittedly makeshift terms.

These objections, and the necessity of this makeshift solution to them, hold equally for the use of the term "embodiment" to refer to the liberated state. We might easily argue that to be in a "body" is to be individuated, to take on the finitude and inadequacy of a particular "incarnation" – in the terms of the "Nirvāṇa Chapter" itself, to be a "God, or a Gandharva, or a Nāga, or a Kiṃnara, or an Asura, or a Yakṣa, or a human" etc.[2517] – which is precisely *not* to be in the state of *nirvāṇa*. But in order to proceed with my analysis here, I am going to have to use the term "embodiment", and the related terms just mentioned, as in some loose sense equally applicable to both worldly (*saṃsāric*) and ultimate (supramundane, *lokôttara*) states. Indeed, I contend that this is in fact precisely the move that is made by the *Yogācārabhūmi* itself here, in using the term *āśraya,* which as we are seeing seems ordinarily to refer to the ordinary given body in some sense, to apply also to the state realised by the Buddhas and the Arhats.

In the clear awareness of these difficulties, then, let us plunge back into our analysis of the passage. I do not believe, in doing so, that I am engaging in an activity entirely alien to the spirit of the passage itself. It is at least clear, in a part of the passage we did not examine above, that the condition of *nirupadhiśeṣanirvāṇadhātu* is unequivocally held to exist (有, *yod pa*).[2518] We also saw above, in the description of the specific cognitive transformation that constitutes the transition from *sôpadhiśeṣa~* to *nirupadhiśeṣa~,* that *nirupadhiśeṣa~* is understood to constitute a domain of direct personal knowledge or experience (內自證, *so so rang rig pa dang mthun pa yin pa, *pratyātmavedanīya*). In other words, as befits the general Buddhist rejection of

[2517] Schmithausen 48, 49; T1579.748a20-21.

[2518] §6.a, Schmithausen 50, 51; T1579. 748b10-12.

crass nihilism, it is not a state of simple annihilation; and, at least for the provisional purposes of analysis, we are justified, I think, in exploring the question of exactly what state it "is".

To use the provisional vocabulary I have just set up, therefore, it seems to me that we can accurately say that the text envisages a situation in which the Arhat (whether in the state of *nirvāṇa* with or without remainder), in virtue of having undergone *āśrayaparāvṛtti,* "identifies with" the *dharmadhātu*-cum-Thusness etc., in the sense that they take *it* as the support or "ground" for their "being", rather than the inadequate and radically unsatisfactory ordinary given body encompassed by the sixfold *āyatana* analysis. In virtue of this transformation in the Arhat's understanding of his "self" and his relation to or place in the world, the manifold of the six sense-bases, with which he was formerly falsely identified (in the condition of ignorance *avidyā*, "conceptual proliferation" *prapañca* etc.) is deposed from its former pride of place in his existential schema, wherein it supposedly comprised his very "self", and is relegated to the status of a mere ancillary accident to his being – a vestige (*śeṣa*), that is to say, a mere superfluity or excrescence.[2519]

This process, it seems to me, can be understood as a radical reconstitution of the *embodiment* of the "person" who undergoes it. The candidate Arhat begins with an inadequate ordinary given embodiment, in the body encompassed by the sixfold *āyatana* analysis, and then, upon the attainment of arhatship, is radically *dis*embodied from that body (and all the subsequent embodiments to which he would otherwise have been doomed by ignorant attachment), such that it no longer makes any difference whatsoever to his actual status or fate. Instead, the newly minted Arhat comes to the recognition that the pure, immutable, all-pervading

[2519] There are possibilities here for comparison with the categories of Lacanian psychoanalysis: effectively, I suspect, the former, putative person is demoted from the status of the ego to the status of *objet a,* which is also "un plus", something extra, a surplus.

dharmadhātu (Thusness etc.) is the actual truth of his "being", that is, in our terms, he comes to be "embodied in" the "absolute".

It seems likely, indeed, that the entire *point* of using the term *āśraya* here is that, as a previously relatively obscure and marginal term in the discourse, it has sufficiently little doctrinal and technical inertia, and is therefore flexible and amenable to a kind of nonce usage whereby it can loosely refer equally well *either* to the ordinary embodiment with which we are falsely identified in *saṃsāra or* to the veridical nature of the true "being" or nature of a Buddha or Arhat in the state of liberation. If any significant shift takes place here in the conception of the place of embodiment in the larger schema of suffering and release, it is therefore not so much in the fundamental conception of given embodiment as radically unsatisfactory, and of liberation as therefore a process of disembodying oneself from that given embodiment. It is rather in the fact that we see here an effabilist[2520] application of the corporeal conceit to *ideal* embodiment as well, whereby a language of embodiment is applied, admittedly in a careful and limited sense, to the ideal state that ensues upon liberation, rather than being restricted only to the negative characterisation of the inadequacies of the given state. In this, the notion of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* that we see here is but a part of what I will argue is a very large pattern in the history of embodiment discourse, whereby the tradition tended over a long period of time to move from the generally ineffabilist stance of the earliest materials towards just this sort of effabilist and eventually kataphatic use of the corporeal conceit. I contend that we can thus understand the conception of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* presented here as a revolutionary change in the *embodiment* of the Arhat, and thus locate it in its proper place in the large history of ideas about embodiment that we are examining here.

[2520] See once more the definitions at n. 39-42.

It is notable, further, that this understanding of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* as a revolution in embodiment is tied so intricately into the corporeal reinterpretation of the difference between *sôpadhiśeṣa-* and *nirupadhiśeṣanirvāṇadhātu.* I argued above (in Chapter 4.2) that docetistic Buddhalogy can be understood as a natural response to a question raised by the claim that the Buddha is most veritably embodied in the "absolute": "What, then, about his historical/final earthly embodiment? What was that?" The logic here arguably mirrors that logic. If the Arhat undergoes a revolution in his (relation to his) "basis", that is, the aspect of the (apparently) objective world that "grounds his being", what, then, about the thing(s) he previously (mis)took for that ground – the body comprised of the six internal bases? For an answer, the text turns to the corporeal reinterpretation of *sôpadhiśeṣa*: that (supposed) body is a mere vestige or leftover, an excrescence (*śeṣa*).

In Chapter 3.4 above, we saw that the corporeal reinterpretation of the opposition between *sôpadhiśeṣa-* and *nirupadhiśeṣanirvāṇadhātu* is extremely marginal in the Pāli materials. In §3.4.6 above, where I surveyed evidence in the Chinese canon for the development of these concepts towards the corporeal reinterpretation (deferring at that time treatment of the **Mahāvibhāṣā* and the present YBh passage until the appropriate sections of this dissertation), we saw further that it is difficult to find much evidence of the corporeal reading of these terms until surprisingly late even in the post-canonical period: basically, we saw that a hazy version of the new understanding is present in Mokṣala, but that otherwise it is not until the translations of the second half of the fourth century that we find it emerging with any frequency, when it is found, relatively suddenly, in a wide range of texts, ranging from Āgamas through Abhidharma sources to Mahāyāna materials. The overall pattern in this evidence thus presents us with a startling mirror image of the pattern we have seen in the opposition of the *dharmakāya* and the *rūpakāya* in the Appendices to Chapters 4.3 and 4.4 respectively: once more, concepts that are

often thought old, at least in the sense that they reach back to "Mainstream" sources if not to the Pāli canon itself, are found in the main to only begin to appear in strength in the late third and fourth century. This is, of course, roughly the same period we are treating here as the breeding ground of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* theory itself.

It is tempting to propose, on the basis of this pattern in the chronology of the evidence and on the basis of the fact that we can discern here a logic (which we have not found elsewhere) that could plausibly have motivated the elaboration of the new corporeal understanding of *sôpadhiśeṣa-* and *nirupadhiśeṣanirvāṇadhātu,* a bold hypothesis that the concept in fact originates in a kind of Sarvâstivāda-Yogācāra nexus, evidenced by the present portion of the "Nirvāṇa Chapter" and the elaborate discussion in the **Mahāvibhāṣā* that I analysed in §4.4.5.

This hypothesis might gain some (admittedly inconclusive) support by the otherwise curious fact that, as I noted briefly in passing above, that there seems to be an echo between the definition of the "support" and "supported" (依, 所依) in the **Mahāvibhāṣā* passage that discusses *sôpadhiśeṣa-* and *nirupadhiśeṣanirvāṇadhātu* at greatest length, and the definition of *āśraya* and *āśrita* at AKBh to 3.41.[2521] In other words, it seems that there is a connection between the notion of the body as what "remains" in the *sôpadhiśeṣanirvāṇadhātu* and the notion of body as *āśraya,* even in a context (*Vibh*) where the concept of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* is not apparently directly at play. Indeed, this connection might in turn partly explain why Xuanzang translates *sôpadhiśeṣa* and *nirupadhiśeṣa* by Ch. 有餘依 and 無餘依, "with/out a remainder *of support*", and also perhaps the reason that in the shift from Pāli to later Buddhist Sanskrit versions of these concepts, *upādi* "attachment" is substituted by *upadhi.*

[2521] See n. 1907.

If this hypothesis holds, it would mean that here, again, we are once more faced with a situation in which following traditional pious apologetics, which naturally wish to find a warrant for every later concept in the Nikāyas and Āgamas, has led modern Buddhist Studies into an understanding of the history of a concept that is in fact the opposite of reality, and that instead of a concept derived from the canon that then wended its way through elaboration by scholastics and then was taken up and modified further by Mahāyāna, we could just as easily have here a concept that was elaborated in Mahāyāna contexts and then found its way "backwards" into Sarvâstivāda and even (Nikāya/)Āgama contexts. This in turn would make *sôpadhiśeṣa-* and *nirupadhiśeṣanirvāṇadhātu,* in the corporeal reinterpretation, another case in point for the general contention that we cannot always assume that concepts shared between Mahāyāna and Mainstream contexts necessarily flow from the latter to the former, and that Mainstream contexts were hermetically sealed against Mahāyāna influence.

Tempting as it may be, this hypothesis runs up against a very significant stumbling block, of course, in *Itivuttaka* 44, which we saw in §3.4.1 discusses the opposition between *sopādisesanibbānadhātu* and *anupādisesanibbānadhātu* in terms which, though slightly idiosyncratic, seem clearly in line with the "corporeal" understanding. It should now be clear, then, that Iti 44 thus comprises a very challenging and clear instance of kind of evidence I refer to throughout this dissertation as the "single anomalous instance", and the methodological problem that is associated with such instances.[2522] We are confronted with the invidious choice between thinking that for some reason a concept the evidence otherwise suggests did not arise until the third century is foreshadowed in this lone text centuries earlier, or thinking that Iti 44 might be a very late interpolation in a body of literature otherwise usually thought to have long been closed by the time those concepts seem otherwise to have become current.

[2522] See §1.3.7.

I do not expect that any resolution of these puzzling problems in the chronology of the development of the ideas of *sa-* and *nirupadhiśeṣanirvāṇadhātu* can be achieved here, and so for the present, I have merely tried to signal them. I will now return to my point of departure, that is, the ways that the connection drawn in the "Nirvāṇa Chapter" between these concepts and *āśrayaparāvṛtti* support my main contention here that *āśrayaparāvṛtti* is a concept of embodiment.

These discussions of the place of the connections the "Nirvāṇa Chapter" makes between *āśrayaparāvṛtti* and *sôpadhiśeṣa-* and *nirupadhiśeṣanirvāṇadhātu* have forced us to rove quite far afield from the contents of the passage itself. The main point for our discussion here, of course, has been that the fact that the passage discusses *āśrayaparāvṛtti* in connection with the *upadhiśeṣa* rubric, and thus connects it, in yet another direction, with the basic problematic of embodiment. In fact, the "Nirvāṇa Chapter" is not the only text that could be cited as evidence of this connection. The same connection between *sa-* or *nirupadhiśeṣanirvāṇadhātu* can also be found in other parts of the very compendious YBh, including the *Manobhūmi,*[2523] the *Nirupadhikā bhūmi,*[2524] and the *Viniścayasaṃgrahaṇī.*[2525] Since my intention here is only to give a

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[2523] See Sakuma, "*Yugashi-ji ron*" 328, *Theorie* I, 167; II, 145-146. The connection here is by implication only, but probably warranted. The text speaks of a *yogin* who has already undergone *āśrayaparāvṛtti* subsequently entering into *parinirvāṇa,* which should, of course, mean that they were previously both *āśrayaparāvṛtta* and in the *sôpadhiśeṣanirvāṇadhātu* – always providing, of course, that the distinction in corporeal terms between *sa-* and *nirupadhiśeṣanirvāṇadhātu* was current and valid for the author of this stratum of the text.

[2524] Sakuma, "*Yugashi-ji ron*" 438-437, *Theorie* I, 167, II, 153-154. Here, by contrast to the *Manobhūmi, āśrayaparāvṛtti* is clearly rather associated with *nirupadhiśeṣanirvāṇadhātu,* as Sakuma points out (*avyābhānirvṛttiḥ katamā/ yaḥ sarvôpadhivisaṃyuktaḥ sarvakleśapravṛttiḥ vairodhikaḥ āśrayaparirttiprabhāvito 'nāsravo dhātuḥ . . .*). Sakuma does not, however, seem to consider the possibility that both *Manobhūmi* and *Nirupadhikā bhūmi* may implicitly assume that there are *two kinds* of *āśrayaparāvṛtti,* pertaining to the states of *sôpadhiśeṣa-* and *nirupadhiśeṣanirvāṇadhātu* respectively, as is the case in the "Nirvāṇa Chapter" passage we have examined here; and that each may only speak of one or the other because it is appropriate to their more general topic, not because they think *āśrayaparāvṛtti* is to be associated exclusively with one or the other state.

representative instance or two of each of the different corporeal associations of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* theory, however, I will not examine these other texts in detail. I hope that the evidence I have cited here already is sufficient to have convinced my readers that the discussion of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* in connection with this rubric is at least further evidence that *āśraya* was understood to refer primarily in the first instance to the body.

I have also argued through this section that the understanding of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* as a matter of embodiment should hold, in a suitably provisional sense, even for the contention of the passage that the true *āśraya* of the Arhat is Thusness, the pure *dharmadhātu* etc. That is to say, I contend that the point of these statements is to convey that awakening entails a disidentification from the ordinary given body, in a manner very much in line with some of the oldest understandings about the bodily concomitants of awakening that we have examined in this dissertation – *and its replacement* with an understanding that the "person" of the Arhat is "embodied" or "grounded" in the Mahāyāna "absolute" (so to speak, bearing in mind that all of the scare-quoted terms need to be interpreted in a suitably loose manner in order to work as a rough description of the supposedly strictly ineffable state at issue). Indeed, I have argued that this is precisely the point of using the term *āśraya* – that it is ambiguous enough to work in application

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[2525] Sakuma, "*Yugashi-ji ron*" 436, *Theorie* I, 168. I expect that Sakuma bases himself here, among the four passages to which he refers in this part of his discussion, primarily on the passage he calls VinSg 4, *Theorie* II, 159-161, where the text states that upon giving up attachment to and appropriation of future existence, the body that remains is merely "like a magical illusion" (*sprul pa lta bu'i lus kun tu gnas pa ste . . .* 其身雖住猶如變化, T1579.581c18), and further that, since all *dauṣṭhulya* has been abandoned, all that remains is the bare life-force (*jīvitapratyaya*) (*gnas ngan len thams cad dang bral shing srog gi rkyen du gyur pa tsam kun tu gnas so,* 一切麁重永遠離故。唯有命緣暫時得住, T1579.581c21-22); on the state of *sôpadhiśeṣanirvāṇa* as determined by the continuance of 'life-force' (*jīvitêndriya*) in the Sarvâstivāda Abhidharma (**Mahāvibhāṣā*), cf. once more p. 876 above. Once more, however, as in the cases just cited, I am not so confident, with Sakuma, that the mere fact that the "condition of the Arhat after death . . . is not considered" is such cast-iron evidence that the text assumes a model in which *āśrayaparāvṛtti* refers *only* to *sôpadhiśeṣanirvāṇadhātu,* and therefore, as Sakuma would have it, that the text "is either 'conservative' on this point or older than the *Nirupadhikā bhūmi*"; *Theorie* I, 168. It could equally be true that consideration of the post-mortem state was not deemed relevant here.

not only to the inadequate state of given embodiment from which the Arhat-to-be begins, but also in application to the ideal state to which the Arhat attains.

Thus, the understanding of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* found in the "Nirvāṇa Chapter" in fact presents the first instance of what I will argue is a more general pattern running through much, though not all, of the various senses in which the concept is understood in a range of texts, and which, I contend, makes the best sense of these various understandings as a totality. This pattern is that *āśraya* is taken up by this discourse as a term which ordinarily would be interpreted in the first instance as referring to the body, ordinarily meaning, probably, the given physical body. It is then applied, however, especially in various descriptions of the revolutionary transformation of *parāvṛtti* and the state that ensures thereon, to a range of conceptions of the liberatory ideal which are intended to challenge and even transform ordinary intuitive conceptions of embodiment. Thus, I will contend that even in application to various doctrinal categories and states that we would not ordinarily immediately interpret in terms of "the body" or embodiment, *āśrayaparāvṛtti* is still properly to be understood as a doctrine of embodiment, and makes the most sense in the broader context of ideas about embodiment as a whole.

In order to substantiate this broader claim, however, we still need to examine a number of other senses in which the term *āśrayaparāvṛtti* was interpreted, and so, to the furthering of that end, we now turn to another sense in which *āśrayaparāvṛtti* was interpreted in overtly corporeal terms, but one which tends more than any examined so far in the direction of the ideal: *āśrayaparāvṛtti* as the realisation or acquisition of the *dharmakāya*.

5.2.9 *Āśrayaparāvṛtti* as (the acquisition or realisation of) the *dharmakāya*

Āśrayaparāvṛtti is identified with the *dharmakāya* as early as the *Saṃdhinirmocana-sūtra* (SdhN),[2526] where *āśrayaparāvṛtti* is mentioned in Chapters 8[2527] and 10.

The most important of these passages for our present purposes is §10.1-2. Here, in response to a question from Mañjuśrī about the *dharmakāya* of the Tathāgata, the Buddha says,

> "Mañjuśrī, the *dharmakāya* of the Tathāgata is characterised by (*msthan nyid*) the realisation of the revolution of the basis (*gnas gyur pa, *āśrayaparāvṛtti*) and the departure [from *saṃsāra*] (*nges par 'byung ba, *niḥsaraṇa*) brought about by the intensive cultivation (*shin tu bsgoms pa, *prabhāvanā*) of the stages (*sa, *bhūmi*) and the perfections (*pha rol tu phyin pa, *pāramitā*). You should understand that [this *dharmakāya*] is inconceivable (*bsam gyis mi khyab pa, *acintya*) for two reasons:[2528] (1) because it is exempt from conceptual elaboration (*spros pa med, niḥprapañca*) and cannot be constituted by intentional effort (*mngon par 'du bya ba med pa, *anabhisaṃskāra*); and (2) because sentient beings are obstinately attached to conceptual elaboration and intentional action."[2529]

Once more, as in the "Nirvāṇa Chapter", *āśrayaparāvṛtti* is regarded as coincident with escape from the cycle of redeath and rebirth. For our purposes, of course, the most important question is the exact nature of the relation between the *dharmakāya* and *āśrayaparāvṛtti,* but here SdhN is (as so often) frustratingly terse and imprecise: we only know that *āśrayaparāvṛtti* is a "characteristic" or "defining feature" (*mtshan nyid, *lakṣaṇa* or perhaps **nimitta*) of the

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[2526] The *Saṃdhinirmocana* is thought to be a relatively early Yogācāra text because it is cited in its entirety in the later portions of YBh. For Davidson this is the "earliest mention and *locus classicus* of *āśrayaparāvṛtti*", though on the basis of questionable assumptions about the authorship and dating of the Asaṇga corpus and YBh in particular; diss. 383.

[2527] The passage in Ch. 8 (§8.13) need not concern us here: it associates *āśrayaparāvṛtti* with Thusness (*de bzhin nyid, *tathatā*), enlightenment (*byang chub, *bodhi*), Nirvāṇa, etc., but this does not add anything to our understanding of the term for our present purposes. See Lamotte SdhN 94, 215.

[2528] Disagreeing with Lamotte and agreeing with Powers.

[2529] *'jam dpal/ de bzhin gshegs pa rnams kyi chos kyi sku'i mtshan nyid ni sa dang pha rol tu phyin pa shin tu bsgoms pa'i nges par 'byung ba'i gnas gyur pa yang dag par grub pa yin no//de'ang rgyu gnyis kyis bsam gyis mi khyab pa'i mtshan nyid du rig par bya ste/ de ni spros pa med cing mngon par 'du bya ba med pa nyid kyi phyir dang/ sems can rnams ni spros pa dang mngon par 'du bya ba la mngon par zhen pa nyid kyi phyir ro,* Lamotte SdhN 149, 257; cf. Powers, *Wisdom of Buddha* 275.

dharmakāya. This at least allows us to think, however, that *āśrayaparāvṛtti* is conceived here as a *sine qua non* of the *dharmakāya*; definitionally speaking, it should not be possible to have the *dharmakāya* without the *āśrayaparāvṛtti,* which means that the ideal, most intrinsic and veritable embodiment of the Buddhas is inextricably tied up with *āśrayaparāvṛtti.* The reverse, however, is not true, as we shall now see, since *āśrayaparāvṛtti* itself admits of two types, one of which is not characteristic of the Buddhas; however, it turns out that even the other type of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* is also a fundamentally corporeal matter.

The text goes on to distinguish between the *āśrayaparāvṛtti* of the Tathāgatas and that of the adherents of the "lesser vehicles":

> "Bhagavan, is the revolution of the basis (**āśrayaparāvṛtti*) of the Śrāvakas and Pratyekabuddhas also to be spoken of as a *dharmakāya*?
>
> "No, it is not . . . . It is a 'body of liberation' (*rnam par grol ba'i lus*, **vimuktikāya*). Mañjuśrī, in terms of the 'body of liberation', the Tathāgatas, the Śrāvakas and the Pratyekabuddhas are similar and equal; but in terms of the *dharmakāya* the Tathāgatas are superior; and because they are superior in terms of the *dharmakāya,* they are superior in terms of innumerable special qualities (*yon tan gyi khyad par dpag tu med pa*, **aprameyaguṇa*).[2530] This distinction [is so great that it] cannot be expressed, even by means of metaphors and analogies."[2531]

The *vimuktikāya* of which SdhN speaks here is an unusual category, and it is impossible to know exactly what is meant by it. It is tempting, however, to understand it, as indeed Davidson

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[2530] This understanding of the distinction between Buddhas on the one hand and Śrāvakas and Pratyekabuddhas on the other is also echoed in a (possible) connection to (*parā-)vṛtti,* at MSABh to the punning exposition of different kinds of *vṛtti* at 9.14, for which see p. 1263 below. Further on the *vimuktikāya* and the distinction between it and the *dharmakāya*, see SdhN 10.10, Lamotte SdhN 162-163, 268-269, Powers, *Wisdom of Buddha* 303-305. In these passages, however, *āśrayaparāvṛtti* does not enter into the discussion. I discuss the concept of *vimuktikāya* in the context of possible connections between this SdhN concept and a *mukti/vimukitkāya* in RGV 2 below, §5.3.6.4.

[2531] *'jam dpal/ rnam par grol ba'i lus yin te/ 'jam dpal/ rnam par grol ba'i lus kyis ni de bzhin gshegs pa rnams dang/ nyan thos dang/ rang sangs rgyas rnams kyang mtshungs shing mnyam mo// chos kyi skus ni khyad par du 'phags te/ chos kyi skus khyad par du 'phags na yon tan gyi khyad par dpag tu med pas kyang khyad par 'phags pa yin te/ de la ni dpe bya bar yang sla ba ma yin no,* Lamotte SdhN 149, 257; cf. also Powers, *Wisdom of Buddha* 275.

suggests we should,[2532] in terms of the fourth of the five "pure aggregates" that have occupied us elsewhere in this dissertation,[2533] namely the "aggregate of liberation" (*vimuktiskandha*). We have already seen that the five pure aggregates constitute a notion of embodiment in a number of contexts, and in the present connection, it is perhaps particularly noteworthy that in one passage in Lokakṣema's *Aṣṭa, vimuktidarśana* was spoken of in terms of embodiment where this language was dropped with regard to the other pure *skandhas*.[2534] We can thus well imagine that *vimuktikāya* might refer roughly to the *vimuktiskandha* as a form of embodiment, and indeed, we might even guess that it is particularly apt to use in the present sense, that is, to demote the embodiment of realisation of the Śrāvaka and Pratyekabuddha to one rung below that of the Buddha, in the precise sense that it is only the fourth of a fivefold schema, which we have already seen itself originates as an epitome of a path of realisation and practice: thus, a realisation that is equated with the *vimuktiskandha* would represent an advanced state, but one that falls short of the final goal.

[2532] See n. 1145. Davidson's identification of *vimuktiskandha* and *vimuktikāya* is somewhat tenuous, and based on a slightly circuitous detour through AKBh to 6.75-76 and MSABh to 11.33. Effectively, he makes the identification on the basis of the following steps: (1) Vasubandhu in AKBh defines *vimukti* in terms of two parts, "liberation of mind" (*cetovimukti*) and "liberation through insight" (*prajñāvimukti*); (2) in MSABh, the "revolutionised/transformed basis" is associated with this twofold *vimukti* (this is easier to discern from the Skt text cited 403 n. 20); (3) (a step left unspoken by Davidson) the equation of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* and *vimuktikāya* in SdhN presumably allows us to infer that the most likely interpretation for *vimukti* there is the same one that is associated with it in these other two texts. Despite the fact that it is tenuous, however, it seems the most plausible reading we have, especially in the additional light of the other considerations I advance here.

[2533] See p. 465; esp. 529 ff. on the content of the five pure aggregates in the Pāli canon and links to other conceptions, including the place of the five pure aggregates in the conception of relics of the Buddha in reliquary inscriptions; §4.3.6 on the five pure aggregates as a form of embodiment for the Buddha in Lokakṣema's *Aṣṭa;* §4.4.9 on the five pure aggregates as part of one of two important Sarvâstivāda Abhidharma definitions of the *dharmakāya*.

[2534] See p. 746.

All this, however, is necessarily speculative, and it is therefore fortunate that the exact nature of the *vimuktikāya* is somewhat beside the point for our present purposes.[2535] For the present discussion, it is enough that the comparison of the *āśrayaparāvṛtti* of the Tathāgata and the Śrāvakas and Pratyekabuddhas here clearly devolves entirely on a matter of distinct modes of embodiment. Thus, the connection between the *āśrayaparāvṛtti* and the *dharmakāya* seen in the first paragraph is not merely a matter of a link particular to the embodiment of the Buddha alone, but rather, it seems, *āśrayaparāvṛtti* is for the text a corporeal matter, no matter what kind of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* is at issue.

The connection between *āśrayaparāvṛtti* and the *dharmakāya* is also a consistent theme in the *Mahāyānasaṃgraha* (MSg). For example, a suggestive connection is posited between *āśrayaparāvṛtti* and the *dharmakāya* at MSg 3.12. where (among other conditions) *āśrayaparāvṛtti* ensues upon the development of the "seed of contact with the *dharmakāya*".[2536] While this passage is very brief, I think it may not be too much to see in it echoes of the (once more, corporeal) conceit of "touching the deathless element with the body" which we have already seen elsewhere in this dissertation was an expression of the ideal of realisation as far back as the Pāli canon.[2537] At MSg 10.3, the connection is reiterated when *āśrayaparāvṛtti* is listed among the defining characteristics (*lakṣaṇa*) of the *dharmakāya,* in a precise definition of the *āśraya* in terms of *paratantra* (for which see immediately below).[2538] Elsewhere in MSg, we see once more a connection, looser this time, between *āśrayaparāvṛtti* and the attainment of the *dharmakāya* as

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2535 See further however MSA and RGV, as noted above 2530.

2536 *chos kyi sku la rag pa'i sa bon spel te,* Lamotte, *Somme* I, 53, Lamotte II, 168. Lamotte for some reason translates as "le germe du contact avec le Dharma*dhātu*".

2537 I.e. *amatadhātuṃ . . . kāyena /phas;* See §2.3.5. See also MSg 10.4 on "obtaining the *dharmakāya* for the first time by contact", *chos kyi sku 'di reg pas thob ma nyid du thob,* Lamotte *Somme* I, 85, II, 274-275.

2538 Lamotte, *Somme* I, 84, II, 268. The other defining characteristics of the *dharmakāya* here are pure *dharmas* (*śukladharma*), non-duality (*advaya*), eternity (*nitya*), and inconceivability (*acintya*).

one of all three bodies of the Buddha, when the text states that *āśrayaparāvṛtti* is brought about by all the mind-boggling practices of the *bodhisattva* over countless aeons, but that the *bodhisattva* makes further efforts ensuing upon the moment of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* in order to "obtain the triple body of the Buddha".[2539]

These examples could be multiplied. For example, *āśrayaparāvṛtti* is also associated, for example, with the attainment of the "body of the Tathāgata" (*tathāgatakāya*) in the *Laṃkāvatâra-sūtra.*[2540] In glossing the punning proliferation of *vṛttis* at MSA 9.14, the *Bhāṣya* thereto says that the [*āśrayaparā-*]*vṛtti* of the Buddhas is said to be distinct from that of the Śrāvakas and Pratyekabuddhas in virtue of the [ten] powers, four confidences etc., which we have seen elsewhere in this dissertation are consistently associated with the *dharmakāya.*[2541] We will have particular occasion below to revisit MSA Bh to 9.60, where the *svābhāvikakāya* ("embodiment in essence", which as we will see stands for *dharmakāya* in the MSA's *trikāya* doctrine) is also identified with *āśrayaparāvṛtti.*[2542] The *Ratnagotravibhāga* also says that the *dharmakāya* is to be identified with Thusness freed from taints (*nirmalā tathatā*), which it says in

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[2539] *bskal pa bye ba khrag khrig bygra stong phrag mang por goms par byas pa'i phyir de gnas gyur nas/ sangs rgyas kyi sku rnam pa gsum thob par bya ba'i phyir sbyor ro//* Lamotte, *Somme* I, 54, II, 171.

[2540] *parāvṛttyānuśrayānupūrvakaṃ tathāgatakāyaṃ mahāmate te bodhisattvāḥ pratilapsyante,* Nanjio 43, Suzuki 38-39.

[2541] MSABh to 10.14, Thurman et al. 79: *balavaiśāradyādibhiḥ buddadharmair asamatvād viśiṣṭā vṛttiḥ*. It must be recalled in this connection that the MSA, as the RGV after it, seems to systematically seek to reject the understanding that the Buddha is to be most intrinsically identified with the *āveṇikadharmas* or any other set of qualities, which it consistently relegates to the place of "concomitants" (*yoga*). See Chapter 5.3 below.

[2542] See below p. 1209.

turn has *āśrayaparāvṛtti* for its defining characteristic.[2543] We also see the same connection made in the later *Madhyântavibhāgaṭīkā* of Sthiramati,[2544] etc.

For the purposes of our present discussion, however, I believe this should be ample evidence to make my point. In addition to the range of connections between *āśraya/āśrayaparāvṛtti* and the body as a sexed physical organism; in Abhidharma discourse; understood in terms of *ṣaḍāyatana;* mastery over the lifespan of the physical body; the body made of mind; and the corporeal interpretation of *nirvāṇa* with and without remainder, we see here that *āśrayaparāvṛtti* is also consistently associated with the problematic of embodiment in the very significant sense that its result is understood to be identical with the most intrinsic and ideal form of the embodiment of the Buddha himself, namely the *dharmakāya.* Given the frequent and well-known claim that the *dharmakāya* is related or identical to the "absolute" in various senses, including in its guise as Thusness (*tathatā*), this fact, of course, should lend much support to my contention in §5.2.8 that the "Nirvāṇa Chapter's" proposition that *āśrayaparāvṛtti* is the purification of Thusness can also be understood within the overall frame of reference provided by the problematic of embodiment.

Via the connection between *āśrayaparāvṛtti* and the *dharmakāya,* we also see in MSg a connection between *āśrayaparāvṛtti* and yet another dimension of embodiment – embodiment as understood in terms of the fivefold model of the (ordinary) *skandhas*. We will briefly examine

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2543 See below n. 2556.

2544 E.g. at *Ṭīkā* to MAVBh 4.13-15a, for which see Sakuma, "*Madhyāntavibhāga-ṭīkā* ni okeru" 124-1125; more generally, see 124-131. This passage is of interest because the context is *dharmakāya* as part of *trikāya* doctrine; Bh has related each of various stages to the three bodies (*prāpty-avasthā buddhānān dharmma-kāyāḥ. anuśansâvasthā sāmbhogikaḥ kāyaḥ. kṛtyânuṣṭhānâvasthā nirmmāṇa-kāyaḥ. sarvvâpy eṣā bahuvidhâvasthâbhisamasya veditavyā*), and Sthiramati then interprets *dharmakāya* in a syncretic manner that combines several of the conceptions of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* we see here, including not only the *dharmakāya* but also the cessation of *ālayavijñāna.* See also *Ṭīkā* to MAVBh 5.2d-4b, 5.10d etc., which are also studied by Sakuma in the same article.

this material also, as the last of the range of senses in which *āśrayaparāvṛtti* is connected to obviously corporeal ideas, before turning our attention to the ways that less apparently corporeal versions of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* doctrine (in terms of *ālayavijñāna* and *paratantrasvabhāva*) can also properly be understood within the overall frame of reference provided by the insight that *āśrayaparāvṛtti* is primarily a corporeal matter.

5.2.10 The five (ordinary) *skandhas* as *āśraya* and *dharmakāya* connected with *parāvṛtti* in the *Mahāyānasaṃgraha*

This connection between the *dharmakāya* and *parāvṛtti* is also elaborated in a somewhat different manner in Chapter 10.5 of the *Mahāyānasaṃgraha* (MSg).[2545] In addition to the fact that it reinforces the connection between *āśrayaparāvṛtti* and the *dharmakāya,* this passage is of interest to us here because it further connects the notion of *āśraya* with yet another concept connected to the body: the fivefold model of the (ordinary, given[2546]) aggregates (*skandhas*).[2547] The text has just reiterated the understanding, also seen elsewhere in the text, whereby the *dharmakāya* is obtained as the endpoint of all the *bodhisattva's* aeons of multifarious practice, by "contact" (*sparśa*).[2548] It goes on to say:[2549]

[2545] Chapter 10 of MSg is an extended consideration of the *dharmakāya,* which, especially when taken with the extensive extant commentaries, presents a body of material about embodiment doctrines too rich for me to have done justice to it in the context of a general study like the present study; see further Griffiths et al., for a booklength translation and study of these materials.

[2546] In contradistinction to the "pure" *skandhas,* which have occupied us so much at different points in this study.

[2547] See n. 2513 for a passage in the "Nirvāṇa Chapter" which, in conceiving of the difference between the *sa-* and *nirupadhiśeṣanirvāṇadhātu* in terms of the continuation or otherwise of the *ṣaḍāyatana* implies an equivalence between these two models of embodiment.

[2548] I.e. at MSg 10.4, Lamotte, *Somme* I, 85, II, 274-276; for the other passages where we see parts of this understanding, see n. 2536, 2539.

[2549] Davidson also discusses this passage, diss. 190-191.

"Through what kinds of dominion does the Dharma Body obtain dominion (*vibhutva*)?[2550] In short, through the [following] five kinds. (1) As a result of the conversion (*gyur pa, *parāvṛtti*) of the material aggregate (*rūpaskandha*) [the Dharma Body obtains] dominion over: the [Buddha] lands; bodies (*kāya*); major and minor marks; an infinity of phonemes; and a crown of the head that cannot be seen (*adṛṣṭamūrdhalakṣaṇa*[2551]). (2) As a result of the conversion of the aggregate of sensation (*vedanāskandha*), [the Dharma Body obtains] dominion over dwelling in pleasant abodes (*sukhavihāra*); these are irreproachable, immeasurable, and vast. (3) As a result of the conversion of the aggregate of conceptualization (*saṃjñāskandha*), [the Dharma Body obtains] dominion over teaching by means of all the collections of words (*nāmakāya*), phrases (*pādakāya*), and syllables (*vyañjanakāya*). (4) As a result of the conversion of the aggregate of volitional predispositions (*saṃskāraskandha*), [the Dharma Body obtains] dominion over: magical creation (*nirmāṇa*); transformation (*pariṇāma*); assembling congregations (*parṣatsaṃgraha*); and the collection of pure *dharmas* (*śukladharmasaṃgraha*). (5) As a result of the conversion of the aggregate of consciousness (*vijñānaskandha*), [the Dharma Body obtains] dominion over]the four] wisdoms (*jñāna*), viz.: [the wisdom that is like a] mirror (*ādarśajñāna*); [the wisdom that recognises the] equality [of all things] (*samatājñāna*); [the wisdom that knows] differentiation (*pratyavekṣaṇājñāna*); and [the wisdom accompanying] the completion of the acts [proper to a Buddha] (*kṛtyānuṣṭhānajñāna*). It is through [these five kinds of dominion that the Dharma Body] obtains dominion."[2552]

[2550] Further on connections between various levels or kinds of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* and *vibhutvaṃ* "mastery, dominion", see MSA 9.41-48, Lévi I, 4041-42, Thurman et al. 88-90.

[2551] I think this refers to the fact that no being, even the most powerful god, can see the crown of the Buddha's head, presumably because doing so would entail "looking down on" the Buddha. See *Bh* (Paramārtha), 諸梵天等見佛之時。如來身量倍高於彼故。頂不可見, T1595.253a15-16, "When Brahmā and the gods see a Buddha, they cannot see his head because its measure is twice their height", Griffiths et al., 100. Cf. LAn Tib. v. 42: *spyi gtsug bltar ni mi mthong phyir// spu gris gcod* [D: *gcad*] *du yod med kyang// dbu 'dreg par ni ston mdzad pa// 'di ni 'jig rten mthun 'jug yin;* Harrison translates, "Even though there is nothing which a razor can cut,/ Because the crown of the head cannot be looked upon,/ They make a show of shaving the head;/ This is in conformity with the world;" Harrison, "Sanskrit Materials" 222. I cannot understand, therefore, what Griffiths et al. or Lamotte mean when they translate here "invisible head *markings*".

[2552] Translation modified from Griffiths et al., 50. *yang dbang 'byor pa rnam pa dus chos kyi sku dbang 'byor pa thob ce na/ mdor bsdu na rnam pa lngas 'thob ste/* (1) *gzugs kyi pung po gyur pa'i phyir zhing dang/ lus dang/ mtshan dang/ dpe byad bzang po dang/ dbyangs mtha' yas pa dang/ spyi gtsug bltar mi mthong ba la dbang 'byor pa dang/* (2) *tshor ba'i phung po gyur pa'i phyir kha na ma tho ba med cing tshad med la rgya che ba'i bde bar gnas pa la dbang 'byor pa dang/* (3) *'du shes kyi phung po gyur pa'i phyir ming gi tshogs dang tshig gi tshogs dang/ yi ge'i tshogs thams cad kyis bstan pa la dbang 'byor pa dang/* (4) *'du byed kyi phung po gyur pa'i phyir/ sprul pa dang/ bsgyur ba dang/ 'khor bsdu ba dang/ dkar po'i chos bsdu ba la dbang 'byor pa dang/* (5) *rnam par shes pa'i phung po* [*gnas su*] *gyur pa'i phyir/ me long lta bu dang/ mnyam pa nyid dang/ so sor rtogs pa dang/ bya ba sgrub pa'i ye shes la dbang 'byor pas dbang 'byor pa thob po//* Lamotte, *Somme* I, 85-86, II, 276-279. Cf. also Keenan, *Summary* 107-108; Griffiths et al., §D, 98-106, 291-293.

The actual term *āśrayaparāvṛtti* is only found in reference to the fifth item here, and then only in one of two Tibetan versions of the text.[2553] Nonetheless, it is surely clear that what is at issue here is a revolutionary transformation (*parāvṛtti*) in the manifold comprising the five *skandhas,* which results in the acquisition of the *dharmakāya*; and that we are thus dealing here with another variant of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* theory in which the result of the *parāvṛtti* is the *dharmakāya.*

It is very interesting, therefore, that the raw material or starting point for this transformation is the five aggregates of ordinary given embodiment. The implication is that the body of five *skandhas* is yet another way of understanding the notion of *āśraya* itself. This merely adds yet another strand to the body of evidence we have accumulated here that *āśrayaparāvṛtti* is primarily a conception of embodiment or re-embodiment.

In sum, then, it is very clear that *āśrayaparāvṛtti* is consistently and repeatedly connected to embodiment in a wide range of texts, across the spectrum from ordinary fleshly embodiment to the highest form of ideal embodiment, through a range of senses including the body as a sexed organism or as the locus of physical mortality; the body spoken of as *kāya* or *ātmabhāva;* the body in terms of *ṣaḍāyatana* or *pañcaskandha* analyses; the body made of mind; the body as it features in the corporeal interpretation of *sôpadhiśeṣa-* and *nirupadhiśeṣanirvāṇadhātu*; and the *dharmakāya.* In light of this large complex of consistent connections, I contend that *āśraya* and *āśrayaparāvṛtti* are intrinsically and fundamentally corporeal notions, that is, that *āśrayaparāvṛtti* is mostly precisely about embodiment.

[2553] Lamotte, *Somme* II, 86 n. 4. Lamotte seems to be assuming the concept of *āśraya* when he reconstructs the *Upanibandhana* of Asvabhāva to this passage as speaking of *pañcaskandhâśrayaparāvṛtti,* Lamotte, *Somme* II, 276 fn; Tib. only has *phung po lnga gyur pa*, Griffiths et al., 291.

In order for this contention to hold where it counts most, however, it has also to be valid for the some important but apparently least corporeal senses and connections in which the term *āśrayaparāvṛtti* is used: where *āśrayaparāvṛtti* is used to refer to the Mahāyāna "absolute" in various senses, and, even more challengingly, where *āśraya* is understood as either the *ālayavijñāna* or the "dependent nature" (*paratantrasvabhāva*) of Yogācāra theory. I will now turn to these cases, and I will argue that even there, the conceptual and rhetorical power of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* still turns on a primary reference to (supposed) ordinary embodiment (as it is misunderstood by the benighted). I will first briefly revisit the problem of re-embodiment in the Mahāyāna "absolute", for which I already advanced much of my argument in the course of analysing the "Nirvāṇa Chapter" of YBh in §5.2.8 above, before turning to the interpretation of *āśraya* in terms of *ālayavijñāna* and *paratantrasvabhāva* in turn.

5.2.11 *Āśrayaparāvṛtti* as resulting in (a rectified relation to) other forms of the Mahāyāna "absolute"

In addition to the understandings and aspects of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* already noted above, Yogācāra consistently understood or claimed that the true *āśraya* was the "absolute", under a variety of names.

Thus, we have already seen that *āśrayaparāvṛtti* is identified with the purification of Thusness (*tathatā*) in the "Nirvāṇa Chapter" of the *Viniścayasaṃgrahaṇī* of YBh (§5.2.8). This is also the case in other texts: e.g. LAS,[2554] MSA;[2555] RGV;[2556] the *Nirupadhikā bhūmi* of YBh;[2557] etc.

[2554] E.g. Nanjio 108, Suzuki 94: *saiva mahāmate bhrāntir avikalpyamānā āryāṇāṃ citta-mano-manovijñāna-dauṣṭhulya-vāsanā-svabhāva-dharma-parāvṛtti-bhāvād bhrāntirāryāṇāṃ tathatety ucyate;* "Thus, Mahāmati, this error, [when regarded] without conceptual construction by the wise, in virtue of a revolutionary transformation (*parāvṛtti*) of mind, egoistic mind, the mental organ of perception, badness, impregnations of habitual energy, [the three] natures, and [the five] dharmas, is spoken of by them [rather] as Thusness." See also *Sagāthakam* 10.77, Nanjio 274, Suzuki 232; 10.148, Nanjio 284, Suzuki 238; 10.151, Nanjio 284, Suzuki 238, etc.

We have also see that it is identified with the *dharmadhātu,* sometimes in the same contexts. Other examples of this understanding can also be adduced, e.g. from texts such as MSA.[2558]

Elsewhere in the MSA, *āśrayaparāvṛtti* is further identified with buddhahood itself (*buddhatvam*), in terms which presage or mirror the discourse of Buddha Nature and *tathāgatagarbha,* while not precisely using any of the exact terms of that discourse.[2559] Sthiramati reportedly further glosses this particular reading of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* as referring, once more, to the *dharmadhātu*.[2560]

I have already argued above, for the case of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* as the purification of Thusness (*tathatāviśuddhi*) in the "Nirvāṇa Chapter", that the claim that *āśrayaparāvṛtti* results in a realisation of (a new relation to) the "absolute" in some form can still be understood within the

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2555 MSA 19.51-54, where *jñāna* is said to have *tathatā* as its object (*jñeya*), and then the non-manifestation of the unreal object and the manifestation of the real object is identified with *āśrayaparāvṛtti: akhyāna-khyānatā jñeyā asadartha-sadarthayoḥ/ āśrayasya parāvṛttir mokṣo 'sau kāmacārataḥ,* Lévi I, 169-170, II, 278-279; Thurman et al., 307-308.

2556 Johnston 21: "The Reality freed from taint' (*nirmalā tathatā*) is that very ['element' *dhātu,* here = gotra] at the stage of as characterised by *āśrayaparāvṛtti* at precisely that stage of the Buddha, i.e. that which we call the *dharmakāya* of the Tathāgata;" *nimalā tathatā sa eva buddhabhūmāv āśrayaparivṛttilakṣaṇo yas tathāgatadharmakāya ity ucyate*. Cf. Takasaki 187. See also Johnston 79, Takasaki 310; Johnston 79, Takasaki 312. The case of RGV is particularly interesting, since it offers the possibility of exploring various connections between *āśrayaparāvṛtti/~parivṛtti* and *tathāgatagarbha,* but such questions would take us too far afield here.

2557 See Sakuma, "*Yugashi-ji ron*" 436-437, *Theorie* I, 167.

2558 MSA 14.30, Lévi I, 94, II, 168; Thurman et al. 182.

2559 MSA and Bh 10.15-17, Lévi I, 36-37; Thurman et al., 79-80. *Āśrayaparāvṛtti* is omnipresent like space, and present in a the multitude of beings (*sattvagaṇeṣu*); however, the Buddha cannot be seen in sentient beings evil in nature (*duṣṭeṣu sattveṣu*), just as the reflection of the moon cannot be seen in a broken water pot; the Buddhas appear and disappear like fire (cf. Thanissaro Bhikkhu's contention that the central point of the analogy between *nirvāṇa* and "fire unbound" is that traditional Indian physics understood fire in its nature to be indestructible and omnipresent *in potentia, Mind Like Fire Unbound,* infra).

2560 Thurman et al., 79 n. 27.

framework of the basic orientation of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* doctrine as a whole to the problematic of embodiment. Indeed, I argued that this seems to be the whole point of using the term *āśraya* to apply both to ordinary given embodiment in various senses and also to a radically reconstituted ground of the being of the person in the liberated state (recalling that in the "Nirvāṇa Chapter" we saw both uses in the same context, in application both to the understanding of the *āśraya* as the *ṣaḍāyatana* and to the *tathatāviśuddhi* model), and that if we do not so understand *āśrayaparāvṛtti* even in its applications to the post-liberation state, we risk fundamentally misunderstanding the thrust of the doctrine.

These same arguments, I hold, apply *mutatis mutandis* to the Mahāyāna "absolute" under other names – *dharmadhātu* and *buddhatva* – and indeed, will also apply when *āśrayaparāvṛtti* is inevitably identified with the absolute under still other names. Further, that this is so is rendered even more undeniable by the fact that, as we saw in §5.2.9 and 5.2.10 immediately following our examination of the "Nirvāṇa Chapter", *āśrayaparāvṛtti* is also explicitly and repeatedly identified in the texts with the *dharmakāya,* which is nothing more or less, by this stage of Buddhist history, than the "absolute" conceived of precisely under the aegis of the conceit of embodiment.

To summarise, then, I believe that the central thrust of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* is to take a concept that has its primary reference to the category of embodiment and to exploit that primary reference to vividly and forcefully express the challenging, radical change in the identity and organisation of the person that attends enlightenment. On this reading, *āśrayaparāvṛtti* is a claim that to be enlightened or liberated is no more or less than to become totally disidentified from all the psychophysical dimensions of embodiment that we ordinarily in our ignorance take to be our person – that is, to become *disembodied* from them – and instead, to totally

identify with Thusness, the *dharmadhātu, dharmatā, buddhatva* etc. – that is, to become embodied in it, which is also to become *dharmakāya*.

I believe I have already expressed this claim as well as I can in my reasons for advancing this interpretation of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* as *tathatāviśuddhi* in the context of the "Nirvāṇa Chapter" above, and it is not my intention to repeat those arguments here. Rather, I merely wish to broaden the range of those arguments to encompass other modes of articulating the notion of the "absolute", to buttress them with the full range of dimensions in which we have seen *āśrayaparāvṛtti* doctrine is consistently associated with the Buddhist problematic of embodiment in many of its dimensions, and to marshal in its support the identification of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* with *dharmakāya,* which, due to my somewhat artificial expository method of pursuing the corporeal associations of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* in order from least to most ideal, we did not have in hand when we were examining the "Nirvāṇa Chapter". With these facts in the forefront of our minds, we are well equipped to examine what I believe are two further dialectical turns whereby the fundamental corporeal orientation of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* is exploited to advance new claims and challenge our understanding of ourselves and our existential situation further, with its application in turn to *ālayavijñāna* and *paratantrasvabhāva*.

5.2.12 *Ālayavijñāna* as the *āśraya*

Probably the most important of the (apparently) non-corporeal interpretations of *āśraya-* as it enters into the term *āśrayaparāvṛtti* is the interpretation on which it is identified with the "storehouse consciousness" (*ālayavijñāna*) so central to Yogācāra theory. According to Sakuma, the first context (in the framework of his relative chronology of the strata of the text) in which this concept of *āśraya* is found in YBh is in the *Viniścayasaṃgrahaṇī*.[2561]

[2561] Sakuma, "*Yugashi-ji ron*" 437, *Theorie* 168.

This understanding of *āśraya* is also found in other texts. For example, MSg 1.48, which speaks about the "seeds of disposition resulting from hearing [the Dharma]" (**śrutavāsanābīja*), states that "in the degree that this disposition from hearing, be it small, medium or large, develops step by step, in that same degree the retributive consciousness (*vipākavijñāna*)[2562] diminishes, and the basis is radically transformed (*āśrayaḥ parā/vṛt*)."[2563] The very next verse makes it clear that the "transformation of support" is here understood as the complete *elimination* of the *ālayavijñāna,* and is understood to be arrived at only upon the completion of that process of elimination.[2564] The implication is clearly that the "basis" (*āśraya*) that is transformed is nothing other than the *ālayavijñāna* itself. A similar interpretation of the *āśraya* as the manifold of consciousnesses, understood by Yogācāra to be the actual basis and constitution of the "person", is found in more than one place in the *Laṃkâvatāra-sūtra.*[2565]

For the purposes of my present argument, I do not believe that it is necessary to demonstrate further that the *ālayavijñāna* is indeed frequently understood in Yogācāra contexts to be the *āśraya* of *āśrayaparāvṛtti,* which I take to be an uncontroversial observation. I will therefore confine my efforts to showing how I believe the identification of the *ālayavijñāna* as the *āśraya* makes sense within the overall orienting framework of the interpretation of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* as a doctrine of re-embodiment.

[2562] *Vipākavijñāna* is an alternative term that refers to *ālayavijñāna* in its aspect as the maturation of prior intentional actions (*karma*).

[2563] *chung ngu dang 'bring dang chen po ji lta ji lta bur rim gyis 'phel ba de lta de lta bur rnam par smin pa'i rnam par shes pa yang 'bri zhing gnas ykang 'gyur ro//* Lamotte, *Somme* I, 20, II, 70.

[2564] *'jig rten pa'i 'dod chags dang bral ba na/ mnyam par bzhag pa ma yin pa'i sa'i bag chags 'grib ste/ mnyam par bzhag pa'i sa'i bag chags 'phel nas bnas gyur pa* [*bzhin no*]// Lamotte, *Somme* I, 20, II, 70.

[2565] See e.g. passage already cited above n. 2508; Nanjio 93, Suzuki 81; Nanjio 98, Suzuki 86; Nanjio 108, Suzuki 94; Nanjio 200, Suzuki 172, etc.

To begin with, it is important to observe that with this doctrine that the *āśraya* is actually *ālayavijñāna,* we have swung back away from the ideal towards the other, unsatisfactory, afflicted, non-ideal end of the spectrum we have been exploring here in regard to the various corporeal associations of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* doctrine. Unlike purified Thusness, the *dharmakāya, buddhatva* etc., the *ālayavijñāna* is not the "true" *āśraya,* in the sense that the realisation of the true *āśraya* is the goal of religious practice and the fruit of liberation. Rather, the *ālayavijñāna* is the *āśraya* as starting point, that is, the ordinary given *āśraya* that is to-be-transformed; in this sense, it corresponds most closely on the spectrum from inadequate, given embodiments to ideal to other models of the ordinary given being of the suffering being in *saṃsāra,* such as the sixfold *āyatana* model or the fivefold *skandha* analysis.

However, this is not merely a return to square one; it may in some sense be a return to the point of departure, but it is a return with a difference. Within the context of my overall interpretation of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* as a doctrine of embodiment and re-embodiment, then, the move to identifying *ālayavijñāna* as the actual basis to be transformed represents another turn of a dialectical process, in which doctrine pursues stepwise a gradual development and exploitation of the underlying corporeal orientation of the concept to articulate Yogācāra claims about the true nature of our predicament and the reality we ordinarily misrecognise.

We have already explored the first step in this dialectic above, whereby the fundamental corporeal connotations of the notion of *āśraya* are deployed to present the challenging notion that liberation involves the realisation of a state of full embodiment in the Mahāyāna absolute. This a notion stretches our ordinary understandings of "body" or what it means to be "embodied", to say the least, and indeed, I believe it is precisely in this stretch that lies the

power of the concept of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* as it is so articulated. In applying a notion that refers to embodiment to the relation to the absolute, the notion of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* as somehow identical with the absolute challenges us to see the problem of our true nature or being from the radically different perspective of enlightenment, rather than from the ordinary perspective of ignorance and *saṃsāra;* the counterintuitive difficulty that hangs about conceiving of the relation to the absolute as "embodiment" is a precise index of the vast gulf between those two perspectives.

With the shift to speaking of the *āśraya* from which we set out as the *ālayavijñāna*, then, the philosophical vocabulary of the school effects a second shift of perspective, and looks back, as it were, upon the unliberated, suffering state from the perspective of the enlightened state. In other words, where the commonsensical notion of *āśraya* as just "the body" (epitomised most simply in the AKBh passages we examined in §5.2.4) conceives of the *āśraya* from the benighted perspective of ignorance and *saṃsāra,* and where the notion of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* as (resulting in) embodiment in the absolute in different senses conceives of the *āśraya* as it is in enlightenment from the perspective of enlightenment itself, the notion of *āśraya* as *ālayavijñāna* conceives of the "pre-liberation" *āśraya* from the same radically reformed perspective of enlightenment.

The claim, then, is that it may *seem* to ignorant suffering beings in *saṃsāra* that they are "embodied" in a "body", indeed, that they *are* no more or less than that body (perhaps conceived broadly as the psychophysical complex covered by sixfold *āyatana* or fivefold *skandha* analysis) – but Yogācāra will say, from its *vijñaptimātra/*vijñānavāda* perspective, that in fact, even in the state of *saṃsāra*, there really "is" nothing more than a manifold of multiple levels of consciousness (*vijñāna*), and that the only "basis" in this manifold is the substrate comprised by

ālayavijñāna.[2566] Indeed, sentient beings are only bound to suffering because of their failure to recognise that this is the real state of affairs. On the well-known "standard" Yogācāra account of the aetiology of suffering, the "I-making" (*ahaṃkāra*) function of "defiled egoistic mind" (*kliṣṭamanas*) radically *mis*-apprehends the *ālayavijñāna,* the actual basis of all existence, as a "self", and driven[2567] by the motor force of this misapprehension, the six "operative" consciousnesses (*pravṛttivijñāna*),[2568] with their objects, spring forth into the bewildering flurry of ongoing phenomenal events we take for ourselves in the world.[2569]

As I hope this brief description makes clear, we can read the basic thrust the insertion of *ālayavijñāna* into *āśrayaparāvṛtti* theory as a move to force a radical revision in our

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[2566] This move finds a parallel in the logic of conceptual development Lambert Schmithausen has identified as lying at the origins of the concept of *ālayavijñāna* itself. Briefly, canonical texts claimed that *vijñāna* remained in some sense in *nirodhasamāpatti* ("absorption into cessation"), and there was a problem accounting for this apparently contradictory fact, *Ālayavijñāna* I, 18; a very early (possibly Sautrāntika) theory, of which they availed themselves to account for this fact, was a theory of seeds that held that "the material sense-faculties" (*rūpīndriya;* which category we might note only differs from the *ṣaḍāyatana* in omitting the sixth faculty of mind), on the one hand, and mind, on the other hand "contain their own seeds (*bīja*) as well as the Seeds of the other". This "implied the view that in this state the Seeds of mind continue to exist in the material sense-faculties"; ; I, 21. In other words, one of the earliest functions, if not the earliest, function of *ālayavijñāna* – to act as the repository for "seeds" of the subsequent existence of (other) consciousness(es) – originally belonged to the material body as a manifold of sense-organs, and was only subsequently arrogated to the newly elaborated *ālayavijñāna* itself (a process Schmithausen goes on to trace in great detail). Thus, the pattern we see here, whereby *ālayavijñāna* usurps the place of a more overtly corporeal body in possibly earlier or more Abhidharmic materials, may be a part of a general pattern in the development and central thrust of *ālayavijñāna* theory itself.

[2567] I am not sure how this is supposed to work.

[2568] I find it difficult to find a single word in English that expresses my understanding of this concept. I take it to mean that these six consciousnesses continually "develop", "proliferate", "elaborate" or "ramify" ("tumble forth", *pra/vṛt*) in the sense that they are unfolded, in apparent multiplicity, out of the underlying unity of *ālayavijñāna* as their substrate. I suspect that in this sense something hangs about the term of the "evolutionary" genesis of things out of an underlying nature or matrix, in which respect Yogācāra seems probably to have been influenced by Sāṃkhya notions of *prakṛti* and *pariṇāma*. The term also conveys a sense in which the resultant apparent phenomenal experience of ourselves and the world is an ongoing manifold of events or "happenings", things that "take place" (*/vṛt*) or "proceed" (*pra/vṛt*), in the manner of a processual ontology.

[2569] The Yogācāra, of course, did not forget the old notion of *satkāyadṛṣṭi* in this connection.

understanding of ordinary embodiment. This move works by trumping the sixfold *āyatana* analysis by probing beneath its surface again to a more fundamental level. In this regard, it is noteworthy that the sixfold manifold of *pravṛttivijñāna* is effectively a reworking of the *ṣaḍāyatana,* but with two significant differences. First, instead of centring the analysis of the person on the apparent body as a manifold of organs – which implies an ontology of real objects that are passively or receptively perceived – this analysis centres on "consciousness" (*vijñāna*). As the middle term between external and internal bases (the addition of which is the most salient difference between the twelvefold *āyatana* and the eighteenfold *dhātu* analyses), these "consciousness" are much more neutral about the ontological status of person and world; an ontological neutrality that to some extent justifies, I believe, the application of the label "phenomenological" to Yogācāra.[2570] Second, however, the sixfold analysis is radically reoriented again, because the whole is placed on a different footing by orientation to the underlying substratum introduced into the system as *ālayavijñāna*; thus, even in the diluted ontological status to which they are reduced by the relabelling as "consciousness", the six members of the manifold of the apparent person and their experience are unreal, and reality is in fact better characterised with reference to a ground to that apparent personal experience that we usually fail entirely to perceive.

In sum, then: I read the notion of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* as (resulting in or from) a purification of *tathatā,* as *dharmakāya,* as *dharmadhātu* etc. as challenging our ordinary assumptions about our embodiment by presenting us with the radically different possibility that we might be intimately and fully embodied in the "absolute"; and I read the notion of the given *āśraya* as (in fact) comprised by *ālayavijñāna,* however it might appear to us in our ordinary *saṃsāric* ignorance, as further challenging our ordinary assumptions about embodiment by suggesting

[2570] As, e.g., in Lusthaus, *Buddhist Phenomenology.*

that, in the true perspective of insight and liberation that such a re-embodiment would entail, even our initial starting point is radically different from what we might intuitively think it to be. This is what I meant by saying, at the outset of this analysis of *ālayavijñāna* as *āśraya,* that this inflection of *āśraya-* and *āśrayaparāvṛtti* doctrine does not represent an abandonment of the basic problematic of embodiment, but rather still *presumes* the fundamental orientation to embodiment in order to have its meaning and force, so that it represents a further step or turn in an ongoing dialectical development of that basic corporeal reference: to call the *ālayavijñāna* the *āśraya* is to say that, in the *true* perspective, it is the actual "basis" for our being when we wrongly take that "being" to be identity with a physical body in a physical world.

The main point for my present analysis, however, is that without the basis orienting reference to embodiment that I have argued is a fundamental part of the notion of *āśraya* and the very point of deploying it in this discourse, this claim loses its shock effect: there would be no point in saying, "You know, you might *think* you are a person in a body, but at base, all that is *really* there in that picture is a deep level of mind fundamentally misapprehended" if everyone in fact already thinks that all they are (all there is) is a deep level of mind. Indeed, this is of course true not only of the claim that the *ālayavijñāna* is the *āśraya,* but also of the *vijñaptimātra* theory more generally (whether we call it "idealism",[2571] "phenomenalism" or whatever). If we all already thought that the whole world of experience is nothing but representations in mind, then it would be a particularly bootless philosophical endeavour, and salvifically superfluous, to expend much energy arguing the point. These claims, then, derive their leverage and

[2571] I do not believe this term is entirely appropriate, since both *grāhya* and *grāhaka* (apprehending subject and apprehended object) are ultimately unreal; it does not seem to me, then, that there is a strong claim in this system that "mind" or "ideas" are real either. Ultimately, however, the game of arguing over which Western label fits this or that Buddhist system best founders on the assumption that our typologies must have adequate boxes for all systems in existence, or worthy of attention or note, whereas careful attention to the actual outlines of Buddhist systems arguably shows this assumption to be false; we must be careful, then, to use these labels deliberately, as heuristics, and to be prepared to throw them over when their heuristic use is exhausted.

rhetorical force from articulation against particular polemical targets, and if we fail to see correctly what the target assumption is, we also fail to see the point of the claim. In the case of the identification of *ālayavijñāna* as the *āśraya,* I have argued, that target is still the basic understanding that *āśraya* refers, in the first instance, to embodiment, and I thus contend that even in the case of this apparently most immaterial, most incorporeal of the various senses in which we have seen *āśraya* interpreted, the problematic of embodiment is still the indispensable frame of reference if we are to interpret the concept correctly.

5.2.13 *Paratantrasvabhāva* as the *āśraya*

We now turn to the case in which the interpretation of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* displays the most tenuous connection of all, if any, with the problematic of embodiment: the claim that the *āśraya* is in fact the "dependent nature" (*paratantrasvabhāva*) of Yogācāra's "three natures" (*trisvabhāva, svabhāvatraya*) theory.

To contextualise this discussion for the sake of readers who might not be familiar with this theory, it holds (in the version that concerns us here[2572]) that all existence, both apparent and real, has three aspects or "natures" (*svabhāva*[2573]):

[2572] As we will be focusing here primarily on the doctrines of MSg, I have for the sake of simplicity assumed only the version of three natures theory found in that text. We should note, however, that an important variant of *trisvabhāva* theory found e.g. in the translations of Paramārtha seems to understand that realisation of the *pariniṣpannasvabhāva* entails the elimination, rather than the purification, of *paratantrasvabhāva.*

[2573] It would be easy to be misled by this use of the word *svabhāva,* which cannot, I believe, imply that all three of the natures "exist essentially" as it were, in the sense in which *svabhāva* is at issue e.g. in the MMK of Nāgārjuna; this would be particularly nonsensical (or perhaps profoundly paradoxical?) in the case of *parikalpitasvabhāva,* the "nature" of which is to be entirely unreal and therefore neither to exist nor to have any essence.

(1) *parikalpitasvabhāva*, or "the nature that is constructed by imagination", referring to the apparent multiplicity of discrete, independent, stable existents in our misguided, "commonsensical", hypostasising experience of the phenomenal world;

(2) *paratantrasvabhāva,* or "the nature of being dependent upon other [things, or 'one another']", often identified with the nexus of causes and conditions comprising dependent coarising (*pratītyasamutpāda*), and referring to the actual, underlying 'objective' state of affairs upon which we project our constructive imaginings of hypostasised entities;

(3) *parinispannasvabhāva,* or "the nature of [things brought to] perfection", referring to reality as correctly perceived by the enlightened, usually meaning for our purposes here *paratantrasvabhāva* when it is purged of *parikalpitasvabhāva*.[2574]

To explore this interpretation of *āśrayaparāvṛtti,* we need first to look briefly at some important texts representative of this idea.

The opening of MSg Ch. 9 famously speaks of the "dependent nature" (*paratantrasvabhāva*) of Yogācāra "three natures" theory as the *āśraya*.[2575] On this reading, *bodhisattvas* attain a superior *āśrayaparāvṛtti* which is twofold or Janus-faced in nature, which is the defining characteristic (*lakṣaṇa*) of an "abandonment" (*prahāṇa*) identified with "non-abiding *nirvāṇa* (*apratiṣṭhitanirvāṇa*). The precise nature of this Janus-faced *āśrayaparāvṛtti* consists in the fact

[2574] Readers requiring further information on three natures theory are referred, in the first instance, especially to the magisterial study by Takemura Makio (*Yuishiki sanshō setsu*), and failing that, to the work in English of Åke Boquist.

[2575] The question of how this might be reconciled with the *āśraya* as the apparently entirely defiled *ālayavijñāna* of MSg Ch. 1, for which see immediately below, is interesting, but we cannot pursue it here.

that on the one hand, the *bodhisattva* abandons the defilements (**saṃkleśaparityāga*); on the other, he does not abandon the cycle of rebirth and redeath that comprises the world of suffering (**saṃsārâparityāga*)[2576] – in other words, the archetypal status of the *bodhisattva* whereby he is "in the world and not of it". *Saṃsāra* is defined as the "defiled aspect" (**saṃkleśabhāga*) of the dependent nature, and *nirvāṇa* as its "pure aspect" (**vyavadānabhāga*); the dependent nature itself, so defined, is the *āśraya,* which is double or Janus-faced in as much as it "enters into both these aspects at once" (**tadubhayabhāgapatita*).[2577] Thus, "the revolutionary transformation of the basis (*āśrayaparāvṛtti*) consists in the fact that this dependent nature, upon the production of its counteragent (*pratipakṣa*), expels its defiled aspect and metamorphoses (*pari/ṇam*) into its pure aspect."[2578]

This same definition of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* as a purification of *paratantra* is taken up once more at MSg 10.3, where it is linked to the acquisition of the *dharmakāya.* We have already mentioned this passage above.[2579]

Āśrayaparāvṛtti is also related to the doctrine of the three natures at MSA 11.17-18, though seemingly in a manner somewhat different to that of MSg Ch. 9. Here, in the framework of a presentation of the doctrine of the three natures similar to that of the *Trisvabhāvanirdeśa* (the relations between the three natures are like the relations between a magician's props, the

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[2576] *byang chub semse pa'i rnams kyi spong ba ni mi gnas pa'i mya ngan las 'das pa gang yin pa'o// de'i mtshan nyid ni gang* [*kun nas*] *nyon mongs pa yongs su btang ba dang bcas pa/ 'khor ba yongs su mi gtong ba'i bnas te gnas gyur pa'o//* Lamotte, *Somme* I, 81, II, 259.

[2577] *de la 'khor ba ni gzhan gyi dbang gi ngo bo nyid de kun nas nyon mongs pa'i char gtogs pa'o// mya ngan* [*las*] *'das pa ni de nyid rnam par byang ba'i char gtogs pa'o// gnas ni de nyid gnyi ga'i char gtogs pa ste/ gzhan gyi dbang gi ngo bo nyid do//* Lamotte I, 81, II, 260.

[2578] *gzhan gyur pa ni gang gzhan gyi dbang gi ngo bo nyid de nyid kyi gnyen po skyes na gang kun nas nyon mongs pa'i cha ldog cing rnam par byang ba'i char gyur pa'o//* Lamotte I, 82, II, 260-261.

[2579] See n. 2538.

illusions he fabricates out of them, and the perception of someone who sees through the trick etc., MSA 11.15-30), the text states that the unreality of imaginary construction of the unreal (*asatkalpa*) is perceived upon *āśrayaparāvṛtti;* and that it results in freedom to act as one pleases.[2580] It is impossible in this case to tell what the "basis" is understood to be, but if we extend the reasoning implied by the analogy with the magician, as per *Trisvabhāvanirdeśa,* then we would expect that, as in MSg, it is *paratantrasvabhāva.*[2581]

This identification of *paratantrasvabhāva* with the *āśraya* of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* presents the most significant challenge to my interpretation of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* theory as primarily oriented to the problematic of embodiment. It is clear that *paratantra* is identified with the *āśraya* as the point of departure, that is, the *āśraya* of ordinary *saṃsāra* yet to undergo revolutionary transformation, as we saw is also the case with the similar identification of *ālayavijñāna* as the *āśraya*. It is simply not coherent to interpret *paratantra,* with its defiled aspect, as the *result* of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* (in fact, the interpretation of *parāvṛtti* as the expurgation of the impure aspect of *paratantra,* which we will see in our texts below, implies rather that, in the terms of three nature theory, the state ensuing upon *āśrayaparāvṛtti* is the *pariniṣpannasvabhāva*). However, the case of *paratantra* as this "starting-point" *āśraya* differs from the case of *ālayavijñāna* in that *ālayavijñāna* at least, in being a level or dimension of consciousness (mind), strikes us as plausibly pertinent or specific to the putative person, and for this reason, the admitted stretch of regarding a claim that we are based in *ālayavijñāna* as a claim about "embodiment" does not quite stretch our conceptual categories or credulity to breaking point. *Paratantrasvabhāva,* however, does not seem to have this same reference to the constitution of the putative person,

2580 *tad abhāve yathā vyaktis tan nimittasya labhyate/ tathâśrayaparāvṛttâv asatkalpasya labhyate// tan nimitte yathā loko hy abhrāntaḥ kāmataś caret/ parāvṛttâvaparyastaḥ kāmacārī tathā patiḥ//* Lévi I, 59, II, 109; Thurman et al. 122-123.

2581 *māyākṛtaṁ mantravasāt khyāti hastyātmanā yathā/ākāramātraṁ tatrāsti hastī nāsti tu sarvathā// svabhāvaḥ kalpito hastī paratantras tadākṛtiḥ/yas tatra hastyabhāvo 'sai pariniṣpanna dṛṣyate//* TSN vv. 27-28.

but appears rather as an entirely "objective" category – a dimension primarily of *things* or the world, not of persons.

How, then, are we to make sense of *paratantra* as *āśraya* in the terms of the basic category of embodiment? What would it mean to say that in the pre-liberation state, suffering sentient beings in *saṃsāra* are in fact embodied in *paratantra*? In fact, I am not sure that the category of embodiment is indeed so relevant in this particular permutation of *āśrayaparāvṛttti* doctrine, and it seems possible to me that by this point, we have been carried, by one further turn of the dialectic, to a point where the original reference to embodiment has been attenuated to the point where it is of very limited relevance.

When I say that the dialectical development of *āśraya* has been carried one step further here, I mean the following. I have already argued above that *āśraya* begins as first and foremost a term and idea that refers to the body; that its application to the absolute thus challenges us to stretch our conception of embodiment to encompass the possibility that a fully enlightened person could be veritably embodied in the absolute; and that the claim that the *ālayavijñāna* is actually the *āśraya* similarly challenges and stretches our understanding of our ordinary pre-liberation embodiment by claiming that we are embodied not in a body, as we think, but in a substratum of underlying consciousness misidentified as a body (and a self etc.). Here, then, the ramifications of *vijñaptimātra* are arguable followed through for the supposedly "objective" domain of ordinary experience. If all the multiplicitous and apparently discretely existent contents of phenomenal experience are illusory, and elaborated by misconception out of a basis in an underlying level of subliminal consciousness, then the logical next question is: how might we more accurately conceive of apparently objective reality?

The answer, I believe, is that it is conceived of under the aegis of *paratantrasvabhāva,* such that *paratantra* is a kind of pseudo-"objective" counterpart to the *ālayavijñāna* as a pseudo-"subjective" substrate. That is to say, where *ālayavijñāna* considers the substrate (*āśraya*) of suffering existence in *saṃsāra* from the perspective of the putative "person" (*pudgala*) or "subject" (*grāhaka*), *paratantra* considers it from the perspective of the putative "thing" (*dharma*) or "object" (*grāhya*). It may be true, then (at least it is true in my opinion) that the leap required to reconceptualise embodiment such that we can think coherently of "embodiment in" the *ālayavijñāna,* that is, a kind of mind or consciousness, is somewhat less than the leap required to think of "embodiment in" the dimension of apparent phenomenal existence whereby all things are interdependent. However, we can also recognise that the distinction upon which the greater or lesser difficulty of conceiving of "embodiment in" one or the other of these conceptual instances is a function of exactly the dualistic perspective that Vijñaptimātra attempts to have us transcend. To put it another way, if *vijñapti* is *all there is;* if, from a different perspective, *all there is* is elaborated out of a ground of substrate consciousness (*ālayavijñāna*); or, from a different perspective again, the only reality to the *all there is* – including, let us remember, the apparent phenomenon of subjectivity – is a web of mutually interdependent causes and conditions (*paratantrasvabhāva*), then it simply does not make sense to say that these things are different from one another, because in that case none of them would be all that there is, and there would be something else.

Logically, then, these various concepts only make sense if we understand each of them as an attempt to convey provisionally, from a different and necessarily partial perspective, an aspect of a totality that transcends the categories in whose terms each of them is necessarily predicated, including, most fundamentally, the very dualism of subject and object itself (*grāhyagrāhakadvaya*). Ultimately, it would seem, there can be no real difference between

ālayavijñāna and *paratantra.*[2582] This is why I called *paratantra* "pseudo-"objective and *ālayavijñāna* "pseudo-"subjective; because each of these terms is posited from a perspective in which these categories are not really valid. When I say, then, that the identification of *paratantra* with the *āśraya* extends one step further the dialectical development of the term *āśraya* away from commonsensical notions of *āśraya* as body, referring to this sense in which it seems, in moving away from the more apparently intimate and personal notion of "consciousness" to an apparently alienating domain of "things" or "the world" writ large, I believe that recognition of this fact must be counterbalanced by the implications of this logic in the terms themselves. In a system of *vijñaptimātra,* that is to say, the *ālayavijñāna* is not really any closer to our given conception of "person", or *paratantra* really any further away from it in a domain of supposed "objects". If we can "in fact" be embodied in *ālayavijñāna,* then it seems to me that by this logic we can equally well be embodied in *paratantra,* which is just another way of looking at the same basic understanding of reality, regardless of whether it is more difficult for us to swallow one conception than the other.

Finally, it may be possible to present this understanding that even *paratantra* as *āśraya* may ultimately make sense in the framework of an orienting embodiment problematic by comparing the understanding of *paratantra* as *āśraya* to that of purified Thusness as the result of *āśrayaparāvṛtti.* In both cases, let us note, we are dealing with a characterisation of the reality or truth of all things, not just the person. In both cases, the real state of affairs - *paratantra* or *tathatā* – is at the outset defiled or obscured (in the case of *paratantra,* by the overlay of

[2582] This is confirmed by the finding of Takemura Makio, the foremost authority on the concept of three natures, that *paratantrasvabhāva* is to be identified with the entire domain of consciousness, i.e. *citta-caitta,* all eighteen *dhātu,* etc; *Yuishiki sanshō setsu* 141. (This understanding, of course, runs against the interpretation of Ueda, following the *Cheng weishi lun,* that *paratantrasvabhāva* comprises only the *darśanabhāga* of consciousness, while the *nimittabhāga* is to be identified with *parikalpitasvabhāva;* and Takemura is obviously well aware of this fact, since his entire book is in a sense structured as a rebuttal of this interpretation. But these controversies are too complex for us to enter into in the present context, where I suspect, moreover, that they may be anachronistic.)

parikalpitasvabhāva), and in both cases, *parāvṛtti* is basically conceived of as a process of purification. The most important difference, it seems to me, between these two ways of conceiving of the process of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* and the true, underlying *āśraya* is that the concept of Thusness seems to conceive of reality more from the ultimate perspective of liberation, whereas *paratantrasvabhāva* seems to conceive of it more from the perspective of suffering, or perhaps, more precisely, as the very knife's-edge or hinge that makes possible the identity of the two and movement from one to the other. If it is possible, however, as I have argued above, to coherently conceive of a claim that we are in fact most veritably embodied in Thusness, as the truth or reality of all things, then it should equally be possible to conceive of a similar claim that we are in fact embodied in *paratantra,* which has a very similar "metaphysical" status. Thus, from this perspective, also, it seems to me that however counterintuitive it may seem at first blush, it is ultimately possible to interpret *paratantra* as *āśraya* in terms of the basic orientation of *āśraya* to the problematic of embodiment, just as I have argued throughout this section that it is best to interpret other versions of the concept.

In making these arguments, however, I am also keenly aware that even if it is possible and perhaps ultimately useful to interpret *paratantra* as *āśraya* in terms of the basic orientation to the notion of embodiment, it is also true that whatever faint association of the corporeal might hang about the term is most severely attenuated in this case, and that this interpretation may well therefore look somewhat tendentious. This brings me back to my admission, made at the outset of this analysis, that even if I have correctly identified the overall orientation of the concept to the body and even if the dialectical relation I attempt to identify between the different conceptions of *āśraya* is found plausible, the dialectic might by this point have been carried far enough that the original reference to a notion of the corporeal is of limited or no relevance.

Even if this is the case, however, I would still contend that the basic corporeal orientation of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* is only lost at the very far end of the set of dialectical relations I have traced between various versions of the concept,[2583] and that it is relevant and indeed central to interpreting all the other versions of the concept we have concerned ourselves with in this chapter. I therefore now turn to summarising my conclusions for this section of this dissertation, which can be summarised in two claims: that the basic orientation to the idea of embodiment is an indispensable frame for interpreting the doctrine of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* as a whole, and reveals that the diverse variations on that doctrine have a greater thematic unity than has perhaps been perceived hitherto; and that *āśrayaparāvṛtti* doctrine thus constitutes an important and hitherto overlooked chapter in the overall history of body doctrine in Buddhism.

[2583] The dialectical logic I have tried to pursue here is frankly etic, and I do not make a strong claim that it is anything more than an arbitrary device to organise the material for the purposes of analysis from the perspective of the relations between *āśrayaparāvṛtti* and the problematic of embodiment. That said, however, there may well be a considerable degree of overlap between the basic trajectory of historical development of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* theory and the overall dialectical logic I have tried to trace here, moving progressively further and further from the a point of departure in the commonsensical notion of "body" to more and more challenging or alienating reinterpretations of that concept. We may summarise the dialectic I have traced in the following four steps: (1) *āśraya* as physical body; (2) the true *āśraya* as the absolute, and a corresponding claim that we can and should come to be embodied in the absolute; (3) *ālayavijñāna* as the actual *āśraya* of *saṃsāra,* as seen from the perspective of proper insight into the true nature of affairs, i.e. from the enlightened perspective; (4) *paratantra* as the actual *āśraya* of *saṃsāra,* etc., as a pseudo-"objective" correlate of the pseudo-"subjective" perspective in the claim that *ālayavijñāna* is such. Allowing, first, that different conceptions tend to coexist with one another, rather than a newer conception utterly sweeping away all that came before, and second, that there is little in the chronology of the materials, according to Sakuma's summary, to allow us to separate (2) and (3) here into separate developmental stages, it seems that we see the same basic outline in the chronology of the materials, and especially, at each end of the spectrum, that *āśraya* as physical body is a relatively old idea, and *āśraya* as *paratantra* is probably slightly later, not being found in YBh at all (despite the fact that YBh includes material on the three natures, in the portion of *Viniścayasaṃgrahaṇī* corresponding to the *Tattvârtha* chapter of BBh, *juan* 73 of XZ; see also Takemura, *Yuishiki sanshō setsu* 74-79). To these observations, we might add, indeed, that it seems that the direct identification of *dharmakāya* with *āśrayaparāvṛtti* is, like the identification of *paratantra* with the *āśraya,* only found in post-YBh materials, and that an adjustment of my "dialectical" account of the relative logic of the concepts might require that we place *dharmakāya* later in the sequence also. With these provisos, however, it seems to me that the account I have given here might not only be a way of arbitrarily organising the material on a spectrum from most simplistically "corporeal" to the ideas with a most attenuated relation to the ordinary body, but might also capture something of the actual historical development of those ideas, though it has of course not been my primary aim here to repeat the project of Sakuma and engage in a fine historical analysis of the development of these ideas.

5.2.14 Conclusions

My overall argument and findings in this section of this dissertation can be summarised as follows.

First, *āśrayaparāvṛtti* is to be understood primarily, and in the majority of its variations and permutations, as a doctrine of (re-)embodiment. I have demonstrated above that the concept of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* is too consistently associated with various dimensions of the concept of embodiment, in too broad a range of texts, for this to be anything less than a basic fact about the concept itself. Further, it is associated with ideas about embodiment right across the spectrum from the ordinary given fleshly body to the most ideal embodiments Buddhism conceives of. Thus, *āśrayaparāvṛtti* is understood in AKBh and *Sputhârthā* thereto as a transformation of the "body" so-called (*kāya* to Vasubandhu, *ātmabhāva* to Yaśomitra); as a transformation of the physical sex of the body; as a transformation of (the relation to or understanding of) the *ṣaḍāyatana*; as entailing the attainment of mastery over physical lifespan; as entailing the acquisition of a *manomayakāya*; and as entailing the acquisition of the *dharmakāya*.

In light of this extraordinary range of strong connections between *āśrayaparāvṛtti* and the problematic of embodiment, I have argued that it is to be interpreted as a conception of embodiment or re-embodiment even in cases where first appearances might not lead us immediately to that interpretation, especially if we treat the various permutations on the concept piecemeal and do not strive for a synthetic interpretation that makes sense of all its vicissitudes as a system.

Thus, I argued that the best interpretation of the claim that *āśrayaparāvṛtti* is a "purification of Thusness" is to understand that upon liberation, the person comes to recognise themselves as actually embodied in the "absolute". Indeed, I argued that the discussion of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* in connection to the purification of Thusness, the six internal sense-bases, and *sôpadhiśeṣa*- and *nirupadhiśeṣanirvāṇadhātu* in the "Nirvāṇa Chapter" of YBh, in particular, urges this interpretation upon us, in showing that after *āśrayaparāvṛtti* and the correct recognition of Thusness as the actual truth of the Arhat's being, the former (supposed) "body", as represented in the sixfold *āyatana* analysis, is thereby seen for (and rendered) a mere excrescence of no relevance to the actual nature of the person. I further extended this analysis to claim that the identification of the Mahāyāna "absolute" as the (true, post-liberation) *āśraya* are to be interpreted on the same model, as urging us to recognise ourselves as embodied in the absolute so-named; and I buttressed this claim with reference to the identification of the absolute *āśraya* under the overt auspices of the corporeal conceit in the guise of the *dharmakāya*.

Along similar lines, I argued that the identification of *ālayavijñāna* as the actual *āśraya,* this time in the pre-liberation state, is a similar claim about the truth of embodiment, but directed towards the shockingly salvific description of the pre-liberation state of supposed embodiment from the true perspective of enlightenment. I further argued that although the connotations of the corporeal are most attenuated in this final case, the identification of *paratantrasvabhāva* as the *āśraya* might also possibly be interpreted in a similar light, especially considering the fact that ultimately, the apparent distinction between *ālayavijñāna* and *paratantra* seems to be untenable, and is countermanded by the texts.

Thus, with the possible exceptions of the earliest interpretations as identified by Sakuma (in terms of the gradual and not necessarily liberatory meditative replacement of *dauṣṭhulya* with

ease, and the supernatural perception of the meditative object), and the interpretation of *āśraya* as *paratantrasvabhāva,* the vast majority of the permutations on *āśrayaparāvṛtti* doctrine are comprehensible in terms of an orienting reference to the problem of embodiment. Indeed, I contend that this basic orienting reference allows us to pick out a conceptual unity underlying the apparent surface diversity of the differing versions of the doctrine, which enables us to see the overall complex of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* as a more or less coherent set of ideas, without thereby artificially collapsing the real complexity of its several inflections into an artificial, monolithic or essentialised unity. Without recognition of this underlying conceptual coherence, indeed, the materials on *āśrayaparāvṛtti* arguably threaten to collapse into a bewildering confusion of apparently random variations.

I therefore hope that my contention that *āśrayaparāvṛtti* is to be understood in the context of the larger problematic of embodiment casts some new light on that doctrine, and contributes to its understanding.

In particular, it seems that we can observe, in light of its proper location in that context, that the various interpretations of *āśraya* basically fall into two categories, which we will recognise from elsewhere in this dissertation as two large themes that run through the entire history of ideas about embodiment in Buddhism at large. These categories are: (1) analyses and critiques of the actual conditions of given embodiment, and its inadequacy; (2) modes in which ideal transformations of or replacements for that given embodiment are conceived. The various interpretations considered above fall into these categories thus (with allowance made for a

spectrum on which some conceptions are intermediate, that is, less than ideal but not entirely identical to given embodiment either, rather than a black-and-white binary polarity):[2584]

(1) (CRITIQUES OF) GIVEN EMBODIMENT	(2) VISIONS OF IDEAL EMBODIMENT
[monastic body in sex-change]	
kāya, ātmabhāva	
ṣaḍāyatana	
pañcaskandha	
ālayavijñāna	
(*paratantrasvabhāva*?)	
power over lifespan	
manomayakāya	
	tathatāviśuddhi
	other versions of the absolute
	dharmakāya

Thus, with the exception of some few marginal doctrines, many of which derive in any case from contexts somewhat marginal to or distant from the central corpus of classic Yogācāra *śāstra* (sex-change, AKBh's *kāya* and *ātmabhāva,* power over lifespan, LAS's *manomayakāya*), the overall field of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* doctrine can be generalised as comprising (1) doctrines that analyse the "basis" before *parāvṛtti* in various terms, but with a common concern to show *that* it is an inadequate site of suffering and requires radical transformation (*ṣaḍāyatana, pañcaskandha, ālayavijñāna,* perhaps *paratantra* in its "defiled aspect"); (2) doctrines that present some vision of the ideal "basis" as it appears after *parāvṛtti*, that is, as perfected, adequate etc. (various versions of the absolute, *dharmakāya*).

Given the basic orientation of the category of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* to the embodiment problematic, I thus contend that "revolutionary transformation" itself, I therefore contend, is nothing more or less than a transformation embodiment, accomplished in two moments or phases (which are logically separable and spoken of somewhat separately in the texts, even if we imagine that in

[2584] The order of items in each column respectively follows the partly arbitrary order of my presentation above, and there is no intended significance of the fact that a certain "given" *āśraya* appears opposite this or that particular "ideal" *āśraya*.

reality they must be accomplished as two simultaneous facets of a single process). First, the Arhat-to-be is *dis*embodied from misguided identification with the false or misconceived given *āśraya;* second, the Arhat is *re*-embodied in the true or real *āśraya*.

This leads us to the second of my major conclusions for this section of this dissertation, that is, the significance that *āśrayaparāvṛtti* has in the context of the larger history of ideas about embodiment, rather than the light shed by the context in ideas about embodiment on *āśrayaparāvṛtti*. The very point, I contend, of developing the language of *āśraya* was that it was flexible enough (partly being new enough) that it could support both of these applications. As such, *āśrayaparāvṛtti* doctrine is a part of a larger and more general trajectory in the history of embodiment.

This trajectory, we have seen, begins in an overall ineffabilist inclination of the early tradition in speaking of the problematic of embodiment. Embodiment is spoken of almost entirely in the negative terms of the critique of given embodiment, and the ideal liberated state is not expressed in corporeal terms at all. This tendency begins to shift in vague inklings of the possibility of better embodiments in the body of marks the *bodhisattva* accrues in virtue of countless aeons of meritorious practice, on the one hand, and the pivotal role played in the path to liberation by the elaboration of the *manomayakāya* by advanced meditators at higher stages of practice, on the other. However, it is only in the cult of the Buddha's relics, it seems, that there emerges the conception of a fully adequate, veritable, enduring (after death) and ideal embodiment of the Buddha himself *qua buddha*, and this development opens the door to a further trickle of more effabilist conceptions of ideal embodiments attending full liberation. This trickle was eventually to become a flood to full kataphasis, running through embodiment in gnosis and the Mahāyāna "absolute" as early as the earliest post-Pāli-canonical (Chinese)

textual record; through the emergence of special bodies of the Buddha named as such (*dharmakāya, rūpakāya,* perhaps the Sarvâstivāda "body of birth") sometime in the third through early fourth centuries; and on into the developments of the fourth century we are examining in the present chapter.

Āśrayaparāvṛtti is thus a significant part of a wider pattern of new effabilist modes of conceiving of the bodily concomitants of liberation in the same period as the texts we have been examining here. It would be premature here, however, to survey the overall range of ideas comprising that pattern, when we have yet to examine some of them in detail. I therefore defer further discussion of this aspect of the significance of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* in the overall context of the development of Buddhist ideas about embodiment until the general conclusion of the present chapter as a whole.

5.2.15 Postscript: *Āśraya* as the Buddha's final fleshly body and the relics in later layers of the Prajñāpāramitā; *āśrayaparāvṛtti* and alchemical transformation of the body in Asvabhāva

For the sake of completeness, as an appendix to the present section I will briefly recall to the reader's mind two final pieces of evidence, in contexts somewhat further flung than the "classic Yogācāra" texts that have primarily occupied us here, which confirm from different angles again my fundamental contention that *āśraya* (and therefore *āśrayaparāvṛtti*) is fundamentally a corporeal concept.

We already saw elsewhere in this dissertation another surprising connection between *āśrayaparāvṛtti* doctrine and other ideas about embodiments in the Sanskrit and much later Chinese versions of *Aṣṭa.* One passage not found in earlier versions of the text speaks of the physical body (*ātmabhāvaśarīra*) of the Tathāgata as the result of skill in means in the perfection

of wisdom, and as in its turn the "support" (*āśraya*) for the "generation" (*prabhāvanā*) of *sarvajñajñāna* and of the Three Gems understood as bodies or "relics" (*śarīra*). Another passage speaks of the relics of the Buddha as "true supports" (*āśrayabhūta*) for omniscience (*sarvajñatā*) itself.[2585]

Given that this notion of the Buddha's embodiment in his gnosis as having a "basis" (*āśraya*) in his physical body or relics never appears in any version of the texts earlier than Kumārajīva, the most plausible interpretation of it when it does appear in the Prajñāpāramitā context, given the larger pattern of chronological and textual evidence that shows it is most likely a product of concerted doctrinal speculation in the Yogācāra context, is that it was borrowed from Yogācāra contexts into Prajñāpāramitā. Given further, however, that it finds its way into the Prajñāpāramitā as early as Kumārajīva,[2586] we can see that it spread to that context very quickly indeed; this furnishes us with yet another example of the way bodies of texts were open to accretional modification over long periods of time, and the boundaries between what we ordinarily think of as sectarian and doctrinal entities were highly permeable. It also, however, more pertinently for our present purposes, gives us one more incidental piece of evidence, in addition the materials examined above, which supports my contention that *āśraya*- and *āśrayaparāvṛtti* was in this epoch primarily a corporeal concept; in the Prajñāpāramitā, indeed, it gets applied to the most highly concrete of the Buddha's bodies (his final fleshly body and his relics), applications not quite found in any of the other, more strictly Yogācāra materials we have examined here.

[2585] See p. 716.

[2586] See p. 722.

We might also recall to mind in this connection the odd passage cited above from Asvabhāva's *Upanibandhana* to MSg, which connects *āśrayaparāvṛtti* to corporeal transformation in yet another novel manner, by explaining it after the apparently alchemical analogy with the transformation occasioned in the body by drinking an elixir of immortality.[2587]

These passages, one set appearing in the literature of a different school of Buddhist thought (Prajñāpāramitā) and one in an admittedly somewhat later commentary within the Yogācāra school itself, only extend further the basic pattern already observed extensively here, whereby *āśrayaparāvṛtti* is consistently a corporeal matter.

[2587] Cited above n. 3134.

Chapter 5.3 *Trikāya*

5.3.1 Introduction

In this section of this dissertation we will examine the *trikāya* ("three bodies") model of the Buddha's embodiment. This model originated among the Yogācāra, most likely in the *Mahāyānasūtrâlaṃkāra,* and therefore probably sometime in the middle of the fourth century. In its earliest form, this doctrine holds that the Buddha is embodied in three modes or forms:

(1) in the essence, or more precisely, in an embodiment that 'pertains to the essential' (*svābhāvikakāya*);

(2) in an embodiment that pertains (somehow) to 'enjoyment' (*sāṃbhogikakāya*), which seems at first to have been understood to refer to the 'enjoyment' of or 'partaking in' the Dharma in assemblies of Buddhas and *bodhisattvas* in cosmically remote Buddha-lands;

(3) in an embodiment that is magical and illusory (*nairmāṇikakāya*), referring to the Buddha's embodiment in this Sahā world through his *bodhisattva* career and into his final earthly embodiment, as understood on a fundamentally docetistic view of the status of that body and those events.

In later forms of the doctrine, which came ultimately to be quite "standard" or normative for the tradition, this model changed slightly inasmuch as *svābhāvikakāya* came more usually to be referred to as the *dharmakāya,* and, it seems, in some contexts, the adjectival nuance of these three terms was lost, and the apparently more substantivised forms *saṃbhogakāya* and *nirmāṇakāya* were used for the latter two embodiments.

I began this dissertation by showing that in secondary literature to date on the history of ideas about the Buddha's embodiments, there has been an undue emphasis on the doctrine of *trikāya* ("three bodies"), which has played out on two fronts. First, I argued, the history of ideas about the Buddha's embodiments has been interpreted in the terms of an unduly teleological framework, which imagines, to a greater or lesser degree, that *trikāya* doctrine was the natural end, consummation and final synthesis of the development of such ideas, and that Buddhist ideas about embodiment thereafter comprise little more than a set of footnotes. Second, I argued that the earlier history of ideas about embodiments had suffered from a pattern of selective (in)attention governed by this teleological understanding, whereby scholars only seem to have looked at ideas and materials that they thought could be identified as forerunners of one or the other of the "standard" three bodies, and then only been interested in such forerunners in their status *as* foreshadowings of what was to come, and not in their own right and context.

I framed this entire project as an attempt to see what the history of ideas about the Buddha's embodiments would look like without the distorting lens of these assumptions and patterns of attention. Much of this study has focused on materials that have previously been partly or even entirely neglected.[2588] In this section of this dissertation, then, it is time to reverse this diffusion of attention across the very broad field of ideas traversed thus far, and shine the light back on *trikāya* doctrine itself, in order to see how different it appears when placed in the revisioned context mapped out by these various studies.

[2588] Most notably, ordinary embodiments in Pāli materials; the more careful analysis of the body made of mind and the body of marks; relics; the discourse of the undying; the Buddha's immortal embodiment; and *āśrayaparāvṛtti*.

I will argue that there is significant evidence in all the significant early contexts where *trikāya* doctrine is elaborated that it was considered a further development of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* theory by the authors of those texts. I will contend, therefore, that if we do not regard *āśrayaparāvṛtti* as a part of the overall field of doctrines of embodiment, we will certainly miss a key part of the purport of *trikāya* doctrine itself.

On other grounds, the internal evidence of these early *trikāya* texts themselves provides important evidence from one angle that even at its very inception, *trikāya* was not a stable resolution or perfect consummation of the core problems in embodiment doctrine in Buddhism, but rather, that it was riven from its very inception by internal tensions. I will also argue that these tensions in *trikāya* doctrine have deep roots in the most fundamental problems that run through the problematic of embodiment as a whole.

We will study the significance of early *trikāya* theory within the larger context of the history of ideas about embodiments. My primary aim is to consider the question of how our idea of *trikāya* doctrine might change in light of other findings in this dissertation. This means that my examination differs in focus from some earlier studies. I will not attempt to give an exhaustive description of the ways each of the three bodies are conceived of in the sources I study, which is largely information I think readers can obtain for themselves by referring to the primary texts. I will also not give too much attention to tracing the prior history of the notions of *nir/mā* or *saṃbhoga.* Nor will I focus primarily on the prehistory of the *sāṃbhogikakāya* and *nairmāṇikakāya* in earlier ideas such as the body of marks and the Buddhas of cosmically remote Buddha-lands, or in the *manomayakāya,* the *ṛddhipada,* and various miraculous feats of the Buddha, respectively – though I will offer some comments about such connections to ideas studied earlier in this dissertation in the conclusion to this section.

Rather, I will try to reveal a pattern of connections between three key early texts from the fourth and into the fifth centuries that elaborate *trikāya* doctrine or related ideas. I will focus most on Chapter 9 of the *Mahāyānasūtrâlaṃkāra* (MSA) and Chapter 2 of the *Ratnagotravibhāga* (RGV), but I will also have occasion to refer, perhaps curiously, to aspects Chapter 10 of the *Saṃdhinirmocana-sūtra* (SdhN). Inasmuch as they share parts of this common pattern, these texts, and MSA and RGV in particular, reflect a basically similar understanding of *trikāya* doctrine and its relation to other key ideas. More importantly, however, recognition of this common ground allows us to make careful use of these sometimes opaque texts to shed light on one another, and clarifies the early stages of *trikāya* doctrine.

It must be recognised that this method is somewhat ahistorical, and runs the risk of confounding the potentially different ideas of different texts.

SdhN, in particular, which is most likely the earliest of these three texts, does not in fact mention *trikāya* (although it does mention *dharmakāya* and *nirmāṇakāya* in relation to one another). Nonetheless, as we will see, it does invoke a key pair of concepts (*vimuktikāya* and *dharmakāya*) which seem to be reflected in one guise or another in both of the other texts, and I will argue that recognition of this odd triangle of texts *may* allow us to make better sense of a key puzzle in RGV, in particular.

MSA is later than SdhN (which is relatively datable in part because it is cited in its entirety in one of the later strata of YBh). John Makransky concludes from a survey of the relevant evidence that the *Mahāyānasūtrâlaṃkāra*[2589] is the "first *śāstra* we know of to attempt a

[2589] Makransky's analysis of *trikāya* doctrine in this text is really excellent, and there is no need for me to reinvent his wheel. For those respects in which I follow Makransky in my reading here, therefore, I will

systematic explanation of the three kāyas", and in particular that the "Bodhi" chapter (Ch. 9) may contain "the earliest textual material to set forth a clear and distinct terminology of three *kāyas*" (referring to MSA 9.55-9.66).[2590] MSA can be dated fairly closely to sometime in the middle of the fourth century.[2591]. It is of course important to consider it for this reason alone.

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merely summarise the most pertinent points, and refer the reader to his study for details. This will enable me to focus better on tying my analysis in with other dimensions of the doctrines of embodiments we have studied elsewhere in this dissertation.

Apart from the other places I refer directly to Makransky's analysis, it is particularly insightful in two respects, which I will not have the occasion to follow here.

First, he notes that early Yogācāra analyses of the nature of buddhahood effectively demote the pluralist understanding of buddhahood in terms of multiple *dharmas* (as in Harrison's alleged "Mainstream" *dharmakāya*), which seems to have been characteristic of a preceding phase in Buddhalogical doctrine. This demotion is achieved by placing the *dharmas* concerned under the aegis of the fifth of the sixfold rubric of *svabhāva*-cause-result-*karman-yoga-vṛtti* (see below), and effectively represents the trumping of older ideas by the new *trikāya* rubric. See *Buddhahood Embodied,* 51, 53-54, 83 etc. However, it will be obvious from Ch. 4.4 above that I cannot necessarily agree with Makransky in characterising these ideas as "pre-Mahāyāna and Abhidharmic" in their origins, as e.g. at 54.

Second, Makransky offers key insights on connections between doctrines of the Buddha's embodiments and doctrines of his multiple gnoses, and shows effectively how the logic of schemes of gnoses (the dyad of *nirvikalpakajñāna* and *pṛṣṭhalabdhajñāna;* the fourfold rubric of *ādarśajñāna, samatājñāna, pratyavekṣājñāna, kṛtyānusthānajñāna*) mirrors the logic of the *trikāya* rubric. See *Buddhahood Embodied* §5.4, 97-104, esp. 102-103. These materials obviously continue and deepen the theme of "embodiment in gnosis" that we have had occasion to note in several other key places in the tradition, though space precludes the exploration of these continuities in detail; cf., however, §4.3.3-4.3.5 and §4.4.9 of this dissertation.

Excellent as it is, Makransky's work has one significant shortcoming for readers primarily interested in *trikāya* doctrine at its origin: he relies extremely heavily on commentarial literature that properly belongs to at least one and possibly two distinguishable subsequent phases of Yogācāra doctrinal history (especially Sthiramati, but also e.g. Śīlabhadra). See n. 2599 below for one detailed instance where this seems to embroil him quite directly in a potential problem of anachronism. Indeed, at times Makransky moves so seamlessly between these various texts that one has the impression that, for him, it is all one more or less homogeneous body of material and thought. This may well be sufficient for his larger purposes (to examine the background to the *Abhisamayâlaṃkāra* commentaries of Haribhadra and Ārya Vimuktisena), but it means that the pertinent chapters of his work (Ch. 4, 5) are on the whole perhaps better taken as a characterisation of the *trikāya* doctrine of MSA and related texts *as it was received in the fifth through sixth centuries.*

In the present work, by contrast, I have been interested in pressing as close as I can to the first elaboration of *trikāya* doctrine, and so the direction I have taken in interpretation is on the whole quite different from Makransky's.

[2590] Makransky, *Buddhahood Embodied* 42. Makransky notes that some of the material on *trikāya* found in MSA is also found in the *Buddhabhūmi-sūtra,* but sets forth his reasons for thinking the latter text later, 377 n. 11. For his reasons for thinking other texts in which the concept appears, including RGV, the *Kāyatrayastora,* are also later than MSA, see 377-378 n. 13. See further 383 n. 52.

[2591] See Zimmerman, *Buddha Within* 78-79. This date depends upon the general supposition that MSA represents an earlier stage of Yogācāra than Vasubandhu's *Triṃśikā.* The *Triṃśikā,* in turn, is cited in the *Laṃkâvatāra-sūtra*, which was translated first by Guṇabhadra in 443. The citation in question presents Vasubandhu's words as words of the Buddha, which would require some lapse of time. Thus *Triṃśikā*

However, as we will see, some aspects of its exposition of *trikāya* are so brief as to be ambiguous. For this reason, it seems opportune to turn for further elucidation to the nearest neighbour we can find to MSA, namely RGV, especially given that, as I hope to show, the interpretation of *trikāya* in RGV is generally consistent with that in MSA, and far more detailed.

At least the later layer of RGV[2592] is later again than MSA,[2593] and the text in its present form thus seemingly dates to sometime in the fifth century.[2594] The earlier layer of RGV, however, i.e. the root verses (*kārikā*), is closely related to MSA 9 (the chapter of MSA in which we find the first exposition of *trikāya* doctrine). We will observe affinities in content between the two texts below. There are also formal reasons for considering the two texts especially closely related. RGV features a rare and complex metrical structure, which is also found in MSA 9; this same chapter shares with RGV other affinities.[2595] On the basis of these features, Michael Zimmerman,

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must date from approx 400-420 at the latest, placing MSA several decades earlier, perhaps midway through the fourth century.

[2592] On the complex problem of the structure and composition of RGV, see Takasaki, *Study* 10-19. To simplify, in a manner which should at least be adequate for our purposes here, the text comprises two basic layers: (1) the root verses (which I will call with Takasaki *kārikā*), and (2) a commentary (the *Vyākhyā,* hereafter abbreviated RGVV) comprising verses (which I will distinguish by calling them with Takasaki *śloka*) and prose. Takasaki treats the prose and verse portions of the commentary as unproblematically the products of a single hand, *Study* 19; I will follow him in this.

[2593] RGV cites MSA 9 three times according to Takasaki, *Study* 41; to my knowledge, however, such citations are confined to the commentary, and therefore do not bear on the dating of the root verses. Unfortunately, Takasaki does not say in his "Introduction" where to find the three citations. For two such verses, however, see MSA 9.15 cited at RGVV prose to 1.147, Takasaki 286; MSA 9.37 at RGVV prose to 1.148, Takasaki 288. See also the overlapping verse at RGV 1.34, Takasaki 207 and 206 n. 62; also Takasaki 211-212 n. 96. Takasaki notes the fact that *āśrayaparāvṛtti* is one of the main ideas for which RGV turns to MSA, but his characterisation of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* in "the orthodox Vijñānavāda" for this purpose is oversimplified, and impedes his analysis of the RGV use of the term.

[2594] The *terminus ad quem* is the Chinese translation of Ratnamati (T1611) of 511 CE; Takasaki, *Study* 7.

[2595] This meter comprises "two *triṣṭubh* or *jagatī* verses followed by one verse in the elaborate meter *śārdūlavikrīḍita,* which repeats the content of the two preceding verses", Zimmerman *Buddha Within* 78. It is found in the section of RGV 1 that features the similes from the *Tathāgatagarbha-sūtra,* and also in the first six verses of MSA 9. See Zimmerman 78 for further similarities between MSA 9 and RGV.

following Lambert Schmithausen, argues that the root verses of RGV and MSA 9 were composed "in the same or a closely similar milieu".[2596]

Now, in terms of *trikāya* doctrine, which is of course our main object of study here, it should immediately be noted that where even the verses of MSA mention the threefold embodiment,[2597] the root verses (*kārikā*) of RGV 2 do not.[2598] This means that, although the root verses of MSA and RGV are probably closely related here, we are reliant for almost all the relevant ideas about body doctrine in RGV on the commentary (RGVV), which is of course most probably more remote in time and doctrinal orientation. However, it remains the case that apart from the commentary (*Bhāṣya*) to MSA itself, the commentarial portion of RGV is, along with Chapter 10 of the *Mahāyānasaṃgraha* (for which see below), one of our two next most proximate detailed sources of information about the conception of *trikāya* in this early context. We must remain aware, of course, that RGVV, in being an overtly *tathāgatagarbha* text which therefore differs palpably in its doctrinal thrust to MSA, may be applying its own spin to the ideas in question. Against this, however, we must also consider that the author of RGVV is still far closer to MSA, in terms of time and intellectual milieu, than we are. With appropriate caution, therefore, I believe that even the commentarial portions of RGV can potentially

2596 Zimmerman, *Buddha Within* 78, citing Schmithausen, "Philologische Bemerkungen zum *Ratnagotravibhāga*", *Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft und Religionswissenschaft* 57, 3 (1971), 123-130.

2597 MSA 9.59-66, Lévi I, 44-46, Thurman et al., 95-98. We will examine this passage in more detail below.

2598 A threefold set of epithets of buddhahood as "profound, magnificent and magnanimous" (*gambhīrya, dārya, mahātmya*), for which see 2.1, Johnston 79, Takasaki 311, is taken by the commentarial layer of the text as referring to the three embodiments respectively. The nearest the root verses come to mentioning the concept of bodies overtly, however, is seemingly the statement that the Buddhas exert themselves to liberate the sentient beings of the world "by means of bodies (*vigraha*) [like] variegated rays of the Dharma" [where it seems the Dharma is conceived of in terms of an analogy with light] (*vicitradharmamayukhavigrahair*), 2.40, Johnston 86, Takasaki 325; this is likened to the way the "king of wish-fulfilling gems (*cintāmaṇirājaratna*) appears in various forms which are, however, without substance (*citrabhāvo na ca tatsvabhāvavān*)"; the verses go on to call this a [mere] "image" (*bimbaṃ*) which abides always in the essence of the *dharmadhātu* (*tat = dharmadhātusvabhāva,* supplied from 2.38; see Takasaki 326 n. 104), as various visible forms (*rūpa*) abide in the element of space (*ākāśadhātu*), 2.41.

provide a valuable additional perspective on the way *trikāya* is expounded in MSA itself, and I hope that the analysis below bears this proposition out in its details.

Thus, the first bulk of this section will present my analysis of related ideas about embodiments in MSA and RGV, with reference also to SdhN. In so doing, my exposition will be structured as follows.

First, we will note that that the elaboration of *trikāya* doctrine in these texts is a clear creature of its time, and is in line with the other developments we have studied in embodiment doctrine in this chapter.

We will see that our key texts emphasise, in the course of their elaboration of the Buddha's *trikāya,* his actual permanence in the *svābhāvikakāya* ("essential embodiment") or *dharmakāya*, and they also give clearly docetistic explanations of the apparent events of his final earthly lifetime. This is in keeping with the contemporaneous ascendancy of the doctrine of the Buddha's immortality (see Ch. 5.1). However, as we will also see, the echoes of immortality discourse do not go beyond this, and we do not get overt assertions of any kind about the Buddha's lifespan, nor any inkling of the idea of an embodiment of adamant.

Also in keeping with other developments in this period, we will see that *trikāya* doctrine in these texts is clearly elaborated against the background of the notion of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* doctrine. Eventually, later in this section, I will further argue that this connection has been observed too little in analyses of *trikāya* and therefore in the history of ideas about the Buddha's embodiments to date, but that the clear connection between these ideas in the texts means that

we should see *trikāya* doctrine as in some senses a natural outgrowth of and next step from *āśrayaparāvṛtti*.

I will then turn to the detailed analysis of ideas about embodiment in MSA and RGV in turn.

We will see that, as other scholars have observed before us, *trikāya* doctrine is elaborated in these seminal texts in the context of a sixfold analysis of the "absolute" (buddhahood, Thusness etc.) comprising "essence" (*svabhāva*), cause, result, function (*karman*), concomitants (*yoga*) and manifestation (*vṛtti*). Much of my analysis here will be focused on the implications for *trikāya* doctrine of its placement within this rubric. In connection with this question, I will argue that there is evidence that MSA, at least, connects the final category of *vṛtti* to *āśrayaparāvṛtti,* and that we should follow MSA's lead in this regard and consider *trikāya* in its relation to *āśrayaparāvṛtti* theory if we want to appreciate its proper place in the history of Buddhist ideas about embodiment as a whole.

The presentation of the sixfold rubric, and of *trikāya* doctrine within its context, in RGV Ch. 2 is much more complex than anything on the same topic in MSA. After introducing this sixfold rubric through MSA, I will therefore structure my presentation of *trikāya* doctrine in both texts around the attempt to clarify two key interrelated difficulties in RGV: a distinction between the "body of liberation" (*vimuktikāya*) and the *dharmakāya*; and the distinction between what is "for the Buddha's own sake" (*svârtha*) and what is "for the sake of others". The task of clarifying these two concepts will lead us through several related questions. I will treat the remaining portions of the presentation of *trikāya* doctrine in MSA along the way as we consider these questions, bringing them in as they are most relevant to the clarification of these underlying problems.

Thus, in the order that we will consider them below, we will first begin to analyse a logical structure that underpins the presentation of the sixfold rubric as a whole in RGV. We will then lay out the related problem posed by the categories of "for the Buddha's own sake" and "for the sake of others" in MSA and RGV respectively. In the case of MSA, in particular, we will see that a vexing textual problem centres on this very distinction. I will suggest that this textual glitch, rather than being the product of mere chance, betrays a fundamental underlying difficulty in the analysis of these two categories. In the case of RGV, I will revisit here the question of the structural logic of the text, to argue that the presentation of this distinction, along with other features of the texts, shows that we must interpret the last three categories (*karman, yoga, vṛtti*) of this rubric as a single unit, and that the problematic of embodiment in RGV obviously spans all three of these categories. On the basis of this analysis, I will suggest that the opposition between what is "for the sake of the Buddha himself" and "for the sake of others" forms an important point of distinction between the *trikāya* doctrine of MSA and RVG, and in this respect, also, it seems that this category carries within it a source of particular difficulties for *trikāya* doctrine as a whole.

I will then examine several passages from other contexts that cast considerable light on the content of the difficult opposition between *vimuktikāya* and *dharmakāya* in RGV 2.

First, we will divert our attention temporarily to same distinction in SdhN, and I will argue that there are sufficient similarities in the two contexts for us to assume that they are genuinely related, and RGV is borrowing from SdhN, but also sufficient differences to show that this borrowing is creative and not merely passage. In particular, I will argue that aspects of the presentation of the concept of *dharmakāya* in SdhN throw light on the same concept in RGV.

Further, I will argue that some significant differences between RGV and SdhN allow us to identify an ongoing process of increasing docetisation of the Buddha's visible embodiments from the earlier text to the later.

Second, we will also examine some parallel passages in RGV 1 identified by Takasaki, which I will argue allow us to flesh out further the specific content of the *vimuktikāya-dharmakāya* opposition in RGV 2.

We will then turn our attention to the juxtaposition between *vimuktikāya* and *dharmakāya* in the commentarial layer of RGV and a doctrine of the root verses that the Buddhas function in a manner that involves (the manifestation of) radically transformed objects of the six senses. Basing myself upon various detailed textual clues, I will argue, in brief, that we can best interpret this juxtaposition as meaning that *vimuktikāya-dharmakāya* in combination comprise a twofold ground for a functioning of the Buddhas whose distinctive emphasis is ultimately on salvific works for the salvation of other sentient beings, and whose medium is the threefold embodiment of *trikāya* itself. This will enable me to begin arguing towards one of the most general conclusions of this chapter, namely, that *trikāya* doctrine is presented as an extension of *āśrayaparāvṛtti,* whereby the three bodies are the "manifestation" or "working" (*vṛtti*) of the Buddha's radically transformed basis or embodiment as understood from the perspective of the benefit reaped therefrom by other beings.

Towards the conclusion of this study, I also briefly visit the *trikāya* doctrine found in Chapter 10 of MSg. My primary intention in doing so is to show a key difference between the *trikāya* doctrine of MSg and RGV, in particular. Since RGV and MSg between them are our most proximate sources to the source of *trikāya* doctrine in MSA itself, I argue that the observation of

this difference is gives us an important alternate perspective to the ideas in RGV to which I devote so much attention here, and that the difference between these two texts betrays a significant inner tension in the idea of *trikāya* itself right from its inception. I must note, however, that one significant limitation of the present study of early conceptions of *trikāya* is that the consideration I give to MSg is only brief. This complex text, both because of its early date, close to the "scene of origin" of *trikāya* doctrine itself and because of the richness of its content, would certainly reward closer study.[2599]

As will be clear from this introduction, the analysis in this section is somewhat complex, and comprises several important subordinate arguments, the thesis of each of which must be demonstrated on its own terms in order for the larger theses of the chapter to hold. This complexity is matched, and I hope in large part produced by, the complexity of the texts I treat here, and of the relations among them. As the first step in building the complex argument that *trikāya* doctrine thus represents a further step in the same ongoing dynamic of conceptual elaboration that produced *āśrayaparāvṛtti,* therefore, and not a supposed natural teleological endpoint of all embodiment doctrine, I now turn to the relations between *trikāya* and the two

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[2599] Makransky further mentions that the *Dharmadhātuvibhāga* (DhDhV) makes brief mention of *trikāya,* Makransky, *Buddhahood Embodied* 42. However, I believe it could well be misleadingly anachronistic to include DhDhV it in the present analysis, since Sakuma has argued, partly followed Matsuda, that it may be later than Sthiramati; Sakuma, "*Madhyāntavibhāga-ṭīkā* ni okeru", "*Dharmadharmatāvibhāga* ni okeru". I also omit consideration of the small quantity of *trikāya* ideas in the *Buddhabhūmi-sūtra/Buddhabhūmyupadeśa.*

Makransky in fact makes quite extensive use of DhDhV to characterise *āśrayaparāvṛtti* as the latter concept enters into the MSA definition of *dharmakāya,* 65-72. If Matsuda and Sakuma are right about the likely date of this text, this represents a potentially serious flaw in Makransky's otherwise meticulous and insightful treatment of early *trikāya* doctrine. It would mean that he was anachronistically building his understanding of the ideas of the MSA upon a text that was as much as two centuries later. Note, in this connection, the following further problems. (1) Makransky's connection between the *āśrayaparāvṛtti* of DhDhV and the *dharmakāya* seems to be based only on the MSA equation of the two – at no point did I notice his DhDhV texts, even the commentary, equate them. (2) The DhDhV model of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* is extraordinarily rich and complex, and goes far beyond anything we examined in the course of the survey of ideas of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* in the fourth through early fifth centuries in Ch. 4.2. However, Makransky does show suggestively that the basic DhDhV understanding of the *āśraya* of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* as *nirvikalpakajñāna* is matched by an apparent identification of these two concepts at MSA 14.28-29; 78.

other ideas about embodiment that have occupied us thus far in this chapter – the idea that the Buddha is eternal or immortal, and *āśrayaparāvṛtti* itself.

5.3.2 The theme of the Buddha's permanence in relation to early *trikāya* doctrine

A first step in showing the links between *trikāya* and other ideas about the Buddha's embodiments that we have already examined elsewhere in this dissertation is to note that in both MSA and RGV, the Buddha is emphatically said to be actually eternal in the very same contexts where *trikāya* doctrine and related ideas are presented. Both texts also speak of the key events of the Buddha's final worldly lifetime, including his *parinirvāṇa* in terms that echo docetistic Buddhalogy. In both these respects, the texts clearly echo the ideas of the Buddha's actual immortality, whose emergence we examined in Chapter 5.1 above.

Showing this eternity of the Buddha in early *trikāya* contexts will necessary require some brief anticipation of aspects of my argument below.

Turning first to MSA, this notion is expressed at 9.66, in the understanding that the three bodies of the Buddha are permanent or eternal (*nitya*) in virtue of intrinsic nature (*prakṛti,* for *svābhāvikakāya*), unceasingness (*asraṃsana,* for *sāṃbhogikakāya*), and continuity (*prabandhana,* for *nairmāṇikakāya*) respectively.[2600] It is also supplemented by the statement, under the head of the *nairmāṇikakāya,* that (the *pari-*)*nirvāṇa* is merely something "shown" (*darśana*).[2601]

[2600] *prakṛtyā 'sraṃsanenâpi prabandhenaiṣu nityatā,* 9.66cd, Lévi I, 46, Thurman et al., 97. Bh explains that the *svābhāvikakāya* is eternal by its very nature, *prakṛtyā nityatā svābhāvikasaya svābhena nityatvāt;* the *sāṃbhogikakāya* is eternal in the sense that it enjoys the *dharma* without cease, *dharmasaṃbhogâvicchedāt;* the *nairmāṇikakāya* is eternal in the sense that it manifests itself again and again, even after disappearing (into *parinirvāṇa*) *antarvyaye punaḥ punar nirmāṇadarśanāt*; Lévi I, 46, Thurman et al. 97-98.

[2601] *śilpajanmamahābodhisadānirvāṇadarśanaiḥ . . .* 9.64, Lévi I, 45, Thurman et al. 97. Bh echoes: *sa punar nirmāṇakāyaḥ sadā vineyârthaṃ śilpasya . . . . janmanāś câbhisaṃbodhieś ca nirvāṇasya ca darśanair . . .* Lévi I, 45-46.

These ideas are also found in much more detail in RGV.[2602] We see this first in the leadup to the introduction of *trikāya* theory itself, through the explanation of the categories of the sixfold rubric *svabhāva*-cause-result-*karman-yoga-vṛtti*. For example, the first verse in the chapter say that buddhahood continues "for as long as [all] time" (*yāvad kālam*).[2603] The first root verse similarly states the permanence and eternity of buddhahood (*buddhatvaṃ,* 2.3a) in the strongly kataphatic terms characteristic of Tathāgatagarbha discourse: it is "eternal, enduring and perpetual".[2604] When the text expounds the "function" of buddhahood (*karman*), buddhahood (*tathāgatatvaṃ*) is said to be indestructible (*avināśa*), enduring (*dhruvaṃ*), quiescent (*śivaṃ*), perpetual (*śāśvataṃ*) and "undying" (*acyutaṃ* [note, not *amṛtaṃ*]).[2605] In the same context, buddhahood (*tathāgatatvaṃ*) = Thusness etc. is said further to be "indestructible" (*avināśa*), referring back to the same set of qualifiers (*dhruvâdi*).[2606] A set of opposites to these qualities of permanence is also given, which makes it clear that transcendence of physical corruptibility and death is at stake: it is opposed to corruption (*puti*[2607]) sickness (*vikṛti*), annihilation (*ucchitti*) and "inconceivable death" (*acintyanamanacyuti*[2608]). The text returns to this theme in expounding the "concomitant" qualities (*yoga*) of buddhahood, with slight variation.[2609]

[2602] In citing RGV in the following, I have very often been guided by Takasaki's translation in his excellent *Study*. I have, however, rarely cited Takasaki's translation verbatim, but have allowed myself to freely alter the English to answer better to the translation terminology used elsewhere in this dissertation, for style, and in some cases, to reflect different nuances in my interpretation of the text.

[2603] 2.1, Johnston 79, Takasaki 311. This verse is *śloka,* not *kārikā;* i.e. it belongs to the commentarial layer of the text.

[2604] 2.3, *buddhatvaṃ . . . nityam dhruvaṃ śāśvataṃ,* Johnston 80, Takasaki 314.

[2605] RGV 2.18 ab, Johnston 82, Takasaki 319.

[2606] RGV 2.24, Johnston 83, Takasaki 321.

[2607] Recall the marginal notion of *pūtikāya* from the Pāli canon, examined above §3.2.6.

[2608] This is a second kind of death, opposed to ordinary death considered as "death *qua* [complete] severance" (Ch. 分段死). The locus classicus for this the *locus classicus* is the *Śrīmālādevī-sūtra* Ch. 3,

When the text expounds the three bodies separately, relatively little attention is given to this theme. However, the exposition of the *nairmāṇikakāya* in particular is dominated by a docetistic explanation[2610] of the key events of the Buddha's *bodhisattva* career and last earthly lifetime (*bodhisattva* lives, birth in Tuṣita, descent from Tuṣita, entering the womb, birth, skill in arts, living in the harem, renouncing, ascetic practice, sitting at the *bodhimaṇḍa,* vanquishing Māra, attaining awakening, setting in motion the wheel of the Dharma, and *parinirvāṇa).*[2611] This list reads like an abbreviated conspectus of the various respects in which the much earlier *Lokânuvartanā-sūtra* (LAn) regarded the Buddha's earthly life and acts as a docetistic show, but notable for our purposes is that in contradistinction to LAn, RGV includes prominently among these acts the entry into *parinirvāṇa*; we already saw above, of course, the way the docetistic explanation of this event in particular is obviously linked to the doctrine of the Buddha's actual permanence (or immortality).

We will see below that in both MSA and RGV, *trikāya* doctrine is presented within the context of a sixfold rubric (*svabhāva*-cause-result-*karman-yoga-vṛtti*). However, these rubrics are slightly different in each text. RGV in fact develops the sixfold rubric to add a further two members,

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where it is called e.g. 不思議變易死 in Guṇabhadra, and it is explained that it is a kind of death undergone only Arhats, Śrāvakas and *bodhisattvas* of the lower stages. There it is explained that the apparent *parinirvāṇa* of such beings is actually a *nirvāṇa* "with a remainder" (here of rebirth 有餘生, suggesting the older reading as opposed to the newer "corporeal" rereading), and therefore that they will actually eventually be reborn, etc. See e.g. in Guṇabhadra's version T353.219c18-23. The implication here is clearly that even this subtle, perhaps "gentler" kind of death is still to be opposed to the true *dharmadhātu, buddhatva* etc.

[2609] *acintyaṃ nityaṃ ca dhruvaṃ atha śivaṃ śāśvatam atha,* 2.29, Johnston 84, Takasaki 322. This is a root verse (*kārikā*). The commentarial verses further take up these qualities at 2.34, Johnston 84, Takasaki 323, adding that it is "exempt from birth" and "exempt from extinction" etc. (*utpādavigama, nirodhavigama*).

[2610] *kṣetreṣv apariśuddheṣu darśayaty ābhavasthiteḥ*, 2.65cd, Johnston 88, Takasaki 330.

[2611] 2.54-56, Johnston 87-88, Takasaki 329-330.

nitya ("permanent", i.e. permanence, eternity) and *acintya* ("inconceivable", i.e. inconceivability). The seventh category in particular is of obvious interest here, for its links to the doctrine of the actual immortality of the Buddha.[2612] Its inclusion brings to a climax the much greater emphasis on the Buddha's permanence in RGV by comparison to MSA, and we might even speculate that the difference in emphasis it betrays might have partially motivated the extension of the original sixfold rubric to include these further categories.

When, in the introduction to the chapter as a whole, RGV first speaks of this seventh category of "eternity" in its eightfold version of the rubric, it ties it specifically to the sixth category of "function" (*vṛtti*) and therefore to the threefold embodiment of the Buddha (*trikāya*), saying simply that these three bodies "function" with the same eternity as the various destinies of rebirth.[2613] This echoes the threefold "eternity", in modes specific to each of the bodies respectively, that we have already seen in MSA 9.66 and Bh, so that it is clear that in its extension of the sixfold rubric to include eternity, RGV is merely bringing out what was already present in MSA, and not going against its intent. When RGV 2 returns to the category of "eternity", it restates it several times.[2614] It also emphasises, in precisely this context, the Buddha's victory over "the demon of death", i.e. Māra (*mṛtyumārâvabhaṇga*),[2615] in emphatic terms that recall the old discourse of conquest over death that we examined in Chapter 2.2.

[2612] See, in addition to passages mentioned individually below, *yāvad kālam,* 2.1 and *nitya,* in RGVV following, Johnston 79, Takasaki 311; *nityam ābhavagater acintyena prakāreṇa vartanaṃ vṛttir iti,* RGVV preceding 2.2, Johnston 79, Takasaki 313.

[2613] *tribhir gāmbhīryâudāryamāhātmyaprabhāvitair buddhakāyair nityam ābhavagater acintyena prakāreṇa vartataṃ vṛttir iti,* Johnston 79; Takasaki translates "'eternally', i.e. 'as long as the world exists'," 313.

[2614] *nityam ārabhya . . .* RGVV prose before 2.62, Johnston 88, Takasaki 331; *śāśvato lokanāthaḥ,* 2.62, Johnston 89, Takasaki 332; *nityam* 2.67, *nityatā* 2.68 (twice, with reference to the *dharmakāya* and the other two bodies conceived of as a twofold *rūpakāya*), Johnston 89, Takasaki 333.

[2615] 2.62, Johnston 89, Takasaki 332.

In fact, at a key moment in the presentation of this category, we even see a fascinating combination of the recurrence of the very *term* that is central to that hoary discourse of the undying, *amṛta,* and a statement of the Buddha's status as "in the world and not of it" that smacks strongly of the standard formulation of docetism attributed to the Mahāsāṃghikas in the Sarvâstivāda **Mahāvibhāṣā*:

> "He dwells in the world, and yet he is untainted by the things of the world;[2616]
> In his state of having obtained peace and the undying, there is no room for the demon of death to act."[2617]

Summarising, then, it seems clear that in RGV, the theme of the Buddha's actual eternity is central to the exposition of the threefold embodiment and related concepts. In RGV, the exposition of this implication of the Buddha's true nature even leads to the evocation of the old related thematics of the undying and the conquest of Māra, so that the connection to the idea of the Buddha's actual immortality is even clearer. Further, we also see the clear exposition of the related docetic interpretation of the Buddha's final earthly lifetime and in particular of his *parinirvāṇa*. While these ideas are developed with much greater clarity and in greater detail in RGV, they are fundamentally consonant with similar ideas expressed in MSA, where we also see the exposition of the Buddha's actual eternity in relation to a docetistic reading of the *parinirvāṇa*.

Thus, in what seems to be its earliest elaboration of *trikāya* doctrine in MSA and the very closely affiliated expansion of those ideas in RGV, the idea of the Buddha's triple embodiment is already closely bound up with the idea of the Buddha's actual eternity. I contend that this is an

[2616] For the Sarvâstivāda-attributed, supposed Mahāsāṃghika parallel to this sentiment, viz. 如來生世住世出現世間。不爲世法所染, var. 如來生在世間長在世間。若行若住不爲世法之所染污, see n. 1860. Cf. RGV Ch. 常在於世間/不爲世法染, T1611.843c03.

[2617] *loke vicarato lokadharmau anupalepataḥ/śamâmṛtapadaprāptau mṛtyumārâpracārataḥ,* 2.66, Johnston 89, Takasaki 333.

indication that *trikāya* accepts and builds upon the ideas about the Buddha's actual immortality, and that it gathers that idea up into itself as part of a larger system of ideas about the Buddha's embodiments.

Ultimately in this section of this dissertation, I will contend that this is characteristic of the larger thrust of *trikāya* doctrine, which appears in the history of ideas about the Buddha's embodiments as a systematising and even syncretising project. First, however, we must pick up another strand that gets woven into that synthesis, and turn to the role played by the concept of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* in these first contexts where *trikāya* doctrine is elaborated.

5.3.3 The setting of early *trikāya* doctrine in contexts defined by *āśrayaparāvṛtti*

The first step in exploring the relationship between *trikāya* doctrine and *āśrayaparāvṛtti* in MSA is to note the way the doctrine of embodiment is set within the framework of an analysis of aspects of the Mahāyāna "absolute", conceived of in certain terms. Like older texts we have studied above (particularly in Chapter 4.2, 4.3, 4.5, 5.2 and 5.2), MSA identifies the Buddha with the "absolute", an understanding that we will see immediately below enters into the notion of the "essential body" (*svābhāvikakāya*) of the *trikāya* triad. Makransky shows convincingly that in MSA, the general conception of the "defining essence" (*svabhāva*) of buddhahood, as it enters into this notion of *svābhāvikakāya*, stems from the earlier identification in Prajñāpāramitā with Thusness.[2618] As Makransky further points out, this understanding that the Buddha is identical with (embodied in) all *dharmas*[2619] is articulated in explicit opposition to the idea that he is to be

[2618] Makransky, *Buddhahood Embodied* 42-43, 47, 49 (relying on Sthiramati more than MSA itself for the connection to *dharmakāya*).

[2619] *sarvadharmāś ca buddhatvaṃ,* MSA 9.4a; MSA and Bh here do not use the term *dharmakāya,* but I believe Makransky is right to interpret the verse as basically referring to this concept, 43-44.

most intimately or intrinsically identified with a plural set of qualities (here *śukladharmas*),[2620] so that it could not be clearer we are dealing with an overtly Mahāyāna "absolute" version of the *dharmakāya/svābhāvikakāya,* whatever we might think about a supposed "Mainstream" version of the same concept.[2621]

To the old Prajñāpāramitā understanding of the identity of the Buddha and the "absolute", however, MSA 9.4 and passages in affiliated texts add the nuance that buddhahood consists in the "*purification*" (*viśuddhi*) of that Thusness.[2622] In a related doctrine, at 9.56-57, awakening (*bodhi*) is referred to as *dharmadhātu-viśuddhi*, "the purification of the realm of *dharma*".[2623] We have already seen similar ideas in §5.2.8 and §5.2.11 respectively that these conceptions of the Mahāyāna "absolute" are also connected with *āśrayaparāvṛtti*,[2624] which is of course not surprising, given that *āśrayaparāvṛtti* doctrine springs from the same Yogācāra contexts as *trikāya* doctrine (though probably from a slightly earlier layer). However, it is worth noting this connection here, as we will have occasion to return to it below.

[2620] Makransky, *Buddhahood Embodied* 43-44; *śukladharmamayaṃ tac ca na ca tais tan nirūpyate,* MSA 9.4cd; for MSA and Bh here see Lévi, MSA I, 34, II, 68.

[2621] Indeed, given that we have been able to trace roughly this same Mahāyāna conception of the *dharmakāya* back through several earlier phases of the literature, even to a form in which it was elaborated in outline without yet being explicitly called *dharmakāya* in the earliest stages of the Chinese record, it is perhaps notable that nowhere previously *has* the Mahāyāna understanding of the concept been articulated in explicit opposition to the pluralist understanding that Harrison assumes is "Mainstream". This might be one further piece of evidence that the pluralist understanding, which we saw is indeed finally evidenced in the layers of the Sarvâstivāda Abhidharma beginning approximately with the **Mahāvibhāṣā* (but which is entirely absent right down to the *Jñānaprasthāna*) is in fact a relatively late reaction to and appropriate of an originally Mahāyāna concept, as I suggested in §4.5.4 might be an equally plausible reading of the evidence. Thus, perhaps we see here the first signs that of a Mahāyāna reaction to a scholastic, pluralist rereading of the *dharmakāya;* and perhaps the absence of any such reaction in the earlier Mahāyāna literature, despite the fact that they are already articulating a notion of *dharmakāya* similar in broad outline to that here, is a sign that in fact, no such pluralist understanding yet existed,

[2622] Makransky, *Buddhahood Embodied* 42-43.

[2623] Makransky, *Buddhahood Embodied* 51-52; Lévi, MSA I, 44-45.

[2624] See also the same connection in RGV, n. 2556.

Next, it is important to note that in this early layer of texts, i.e. principally in MSA and other early texts, the *trikāya* triad centres, rather than on the *dharmakāya,* on a *svābhāvikakāya* or "embodiment in [its own] essence", although in later layers of the tradition saw this *svābhāvikakāya* gradually replaced by the *dharmakāya.*[2625] Makransky perceptively and convincingly relates this *svābhāvikakāya* to the category of *svabhāva* as the first of a sixfold rubric in terms of which MSA, RGV and related texts interpret the various aspects of Buddhahood.[2626] This rubric comprises: (1) essence (*svabhāva*); (2) cause (*hetu*); (3) result (*phala*); (4) "function" or "working" (*karman*);[2627] (5) "endowment" (*yoga,* "concomitants", "conjoined [qualities]"); (6) manifestation, " modes" (*vṛtti*). Makransky points us to two relevant passages in MSA, from Chs. 21 and 9 respectively, where parts of this rubric are related to the *trikāya* rubric in various ways that clarify it greatly.

Within the terms of this rubric, MSABh to 21.60 glosses the *svabhāva* of the Buddha as "purified Thusness" (*viśuddhā tathatā*), which clearly brings us back to the MSA 9.4 notion of buddhahood

[2625] Makransky, *Buddhahood Embodied* 61, 383 n. 39, 383 n. 52.

[2626] Makransky, Chapter 4.3, 50-54; on this sixfold rubric, which also occurs in RGV, the *Buddhabhūmyupadeśa,* and MSg 10.27, see also Takasaki Jikidō, Appendix III, "Description of Ultimate Reality by Means of the Six Categories in Mahāyāna Buddhism", *Study* 400-408.

[2627] I take this term as referring to what buddhahood "does", as opposed to what it "is". As will become apparent below, I regard the last three members of this sixfold rubric as all of a piece, and part of this understanding is that they are all, in their own way, about what buddhahood "does" in this sense, whereas the first half of the rubric is basically about what buddhahood "is". *Karman* here is to be distinguished from *karma* as "intentional action with moral consequences that binds the actor to *saṃsāra*", of course. It might be possible to use the translation "acts" here, to recall e.g. "the acts of the Apostles" etc., in an attempt to distinguish the holy acts of the Buddha, which comprise the referent here, from ordinary (karmic) "action" (*karma*), from which the Buddha is of course exempt. Another possibility might have been to use the word "works" as in "holy works". Where such translations fall down, however, is that, as we shall see below, *karman* here also includes an important dimension which is for the Buddha himself, whereas both "acts" and "works" convey the impression of holy activity exclusively for the benefit of others. I have thus chosen "function" as hopefully a more encompassing term.

(*buddhatva*) we noted after Makransky just above.[2628] At 9.56-57, similarly, where we just saw *svabhāva* is further related to the "purification of the realm of *dharma*" (*dharmadhātu-viśuddhi*)", it is in the context of the same sixfold rubric.[2629] In other words, in the terms I use here, it is clear that this "essence" of buddhahood is none other than the Mahāyāna "absolute". This constellation of passages thus strongly supports Makransky's argument that the term *svābhāvikakāya* is intended to mean "embodiment in *svabhāva*" in this sense – that the Buddha is embodied in the essence of things, which is, of course, in virtue of his identity with that essence, also his own essence.

Thus, we see that as in an important variant of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* doctrine, so here, too, the "absolute" is conceived of as Thusness, and buddhahood is conceived of as "purified Thusness"; and that buddhahood is identified with this Thusness in the terms of a category of essence that plays out in a notion of embodiment, the *svābhāvikakāya,* just as *āśrayaparāvṛtti* is a doctrine of embodiment in the "absolute".

At MSA 9.60, however, the connection between *trikāya* and *āśrayaparāvṛtti* becomes explicit. Here, I postpone for the moment certain considerations about the exposition of the sixfold rubric of which *svabhāva* is a part, and other parts of *trikāya* doctrine, and focus only on parts of the text revealing of the relation to *āśrayaparāvṛtti.* Speaking in the terms of the *trikāya* paradigm, the text says:

> "The varieties of the embodiment of the Buddhas are: embodiment in essence, that in enjoyment, and last, that in magical manifestation; the first is the basis (*āśraya*) of the other two."[2630]

[2628] Makransky, *Buddhahood Embodied* 50-51; Lévi MSA I, 188-189.

[2629] Makransky, *Buddhahood Embodied* 51.

[2630] *svābhāviko 'tha sāṃbhogyaḥ kāyo nairmāṇiko 'paraḥ/ kāyabhedā hi buddhānāṃ prathamas tu dvayāśraya*, Lévi MSA I, 45; Makransky 56-58, cf. Lévi MSA II 86; Thurman et al. 95.

Here, the tie that we already observed to the apparently older *āśrayaparāvṛtti* via the common ground of *tathatāviśuddhi* and *dharmadhātuviśuddhi* already becomes much closer, since it is clearly stated that the *dharmakāya* is the "basis" (*āśraya*) of other forms of embodiment.

Bh goes on immediately to make the connection absolutely explicit. "Embodiment in dharma (*dharmakāya*), which pertains to the essence (*svābhāvika*), is defined by the revolutionary transformation of the basis (*āśrayaparāvṛttilakṣaṇa*)."[2631] This interpretation is entirely in keeping with the text's understanding of *svabhāva* as the purification of Thusness/the *dharmadhātu* etc.

This link between the *svābhāvikakāya, āśraya*[*-parāvṛtti*] and the (purified) *dharmadhatu* is further confirmed when the text returns to the topic a few verses later, towards the close of its section on the three bodies. At MSA and Bh 9.65-66, the text reiterates the point that the *svābhāvikakāya* is the "basis" (*āśraya*) of the other two modes of embodiment.[2632] The *kārikā* then go on in 9.66 to say that this "basis" is one of three respects in which the three kinds of embodiment are equal despite their differences, and in glossing this statement, Bh says, "[They are equal] in [their] basis, because of the lack of differentiation in the *dharmadhātu.*"[2633] Thus, it is clear that for the *Bhāṣya,* at least (and, once more, this interpretation is very reasonable), the *āśraya* that is the *svābhāvikakāya* is identical to the "ultimate" in the guise of the *dharmadhātu*. The equation between three terms – the "ultimate" variously conceived, the Buddha's most intrinsic embodiment, and the "basis" of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* – is thus crystal clear.

[2631] Lévi I, 45; Thurman et al., Makransky, *Buddhahood Embodied* 57.

[2632] *sāśraya svaparārtho,* 9.65c, *idem* Bh; *dvayoḥ svaparārthaprabhāvitatvāt dvayoś ca tadāśritatvād yathā pūrvam uktaṃ,* Bh; Lévi I, 46.

[2633] *dharmadhātor abhinnatvāt āśrayeṇa,* Lévi I, 46.

Thus, the connection between the *svābhāvikakāya* (/*dharmakāya*) of MSA and the (probably older) *āśrayaparāvṛtti* doctrine is implicit in the *kārikā,* and already explicit in the *Bhāṣya,* nearly as close as we can get to the very scene of the elaboration of *trikāya* doctrine itself. This pattern extends beyond MSA, however, as Nagao Gadjin has pointed out.[2634] It is of particular interest to us here to examine further passages that make the same connection in the Chapter 2 of the *Ratnagotravibhāga.*

As we will see in further detail below, the basic framework for RGV's treatment of *trikāya* is very similar to that of MSA. Naturally enough, one significant difference is the overall framework of the way in which the text conceives of the "absolute" – here first and foremost as *gotra* ("the element/lineage"). However, as in MSA, this "absolute" is considered very often under the guise of *tathatā,* "Thusness", and within that overall framework, realisation is similarly considered as a process of the purification of Thusness. Like MSA, RGV expounds the *trikāya* in the context of a underlying reference to the realised "absolute" and buddhahood – in this case, more particularly, with *nirmalā tathatā,* "Thusness free of taint/pollution/defilement".[2635]

These parallels between the two texts also clearly extend to the connection between the absolute as purified Thusness, buddhahood as embodied in it, and *āśrayaparāvṛtti*. Like MSA, once more, RGV associates *svabhāva*, within the terms of the same sixfold rubric see in MSA, with *āśrayaparivṛtti,*[2636] and regards the *svābhāvikakāya* as the "basis" (*āśraya*) of the other two

[2634] Nagao, "On the Theory" 31 and n. 10.

[2635] This is the topic of the entirety of RGV 2.

[2636] In RGV is almost exclusively called *āśrayaparivṛtti.*

embodiments.[2637] The notion of *āśrayaparivṛtti* is first used to gloss "pure Thusness" itself, that is, the category to which the expanded sixfold (eightfold) rubric is applied[2638] (and it obviously makes perfect sense to use the same gloss for the category analysed and that same category under the rubric of its "essence", i.e. for what the category is in itself). It is then also used when expounding specifically on *svabhāva* within the terms of the overall rubric.[2639]

In RGV, moreover, the way *āśrayaparāvṛtti* is worked into the overall exposition of the problematic of embodiment and the related exposition of the sixfold rubric (*svabhāva*-cause-effect-*karman-yoga-vṛtti*) casts further light on the extent to which it is fundamental to that exposition. I will argue below that in RGV especially, the last three members of this rubric in many ways form a single unit, and that the problematic of embodiment runs throughout the exposition of this unit. It is surely significant, therefore, that in RGV(V), *āśrayaparāvṛtti* is in

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[2637] *svaparârthas tadāśrayaḥ,* RGV 2.1b, Takasaki 310; *kāyaḥ svabhāvikaḥ śubhaḥ/ akṛtrimatvāt prakṛter guṇaratnâśrayatvataḥ,* 1.151, Johnston 70, Takasaki 289. This can probably also be related to the way the text speaks of buddhahood (= "tathāgatahood", *tathāgatatvaṃ*) as the "foothold" or "foundation" (*pada*), 2.18bc, Johnston 82, Takasaki 319; again at 2.26, Johnston 83, Takasaki 321 (referring to "immaculate wisdom" *amalajñāna,* i.e. the twofold wisdom that is the basic category in whose terms buddhahood is being analysed, under the head of "acts", in this section).

[2638] *katamā nirmalā tathatā . . . sarvâkāramalavigamād āśrayaparivṛttir vyavasthāpyate,* Johnston 79, Takasaki 310.

[2639] *tadviśuddhir āśrayaparivṛrteḥ svabhāvo veditavyaḥ,* Johnston 79, Takasaki 311-312. See also *yad uktam āśrayaparivṛtteḥ svabhāvo viśuddhir,* RGVV following 2.7, Johnston 80, Takasaki 315. In setting up the distinction between *svabhāva* and the (third) category of *phala* "effect" within the eightfold rubric, the text goes on to say that this *viśuddhi* is of two kinds, "innate" or "aboriginal" (*prakṛtiviśuddhi*) and "purity resulting from the removal of defilement" (*vaimalyavuśuddhi*); of these, *prakṛtiviśuddhi,* which refers back to *svabhāva* in the terms of the overarching rubric and therefore to *āśrayaparivṛtti,* is said further to be "that which is free from [defilement] and not associated with [it], *for the reason that the luminous innate nature of the mind is never associated with adventitious defilements,*" *tatra prakṛtiviśuddhir yā vimuktir na ca visaṃyogaḥ prabhāsvarāyāś cittaprakṛter āgantukamalâvisaṃyogāt,* Johnston 80, Takasaki 315-316. This association between *āśrayaparivṛtti/-parāvṛtti* and the "luminescent", aboriginally and utterly pure "innate nature of the mind" (*prabhāsvaracittaprakṛti*), at only the single remove of the mediating concept of pure Thusness, brings us to the very brink of further developments that were to play out in sixth century China in the translation corpus of Paramārtha, especially in the guise of his famous (or notorious) coinage of the *amalavijñāna* or "taintless consciousness".

fact identified with the third member of the rubric, "result".[2640] *Āśrayaparāvṛtti* is thus put in place before the entirety of the latter half of the rubric, in which the text discusses embodiment. The understanding seems to be that *āśrayaparāvṛtti* is a necessary precondition for embodiment in all its dimensions. We must bear in mind that *āśrayaparāvṛtti* is in the background throughout that entire discussion.

To summarise, then, it is clear that *āśrayaparāvṛtti* is an intrinsic part of the conceptual environment in which *trikāya* doctrine is elaborated in both MSA and RGV. The conception of the "absolute" in terms of Thusness, and of realisation as a process of purification of the "absolute", is entirely consonant with an important and earlier strand of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* theory already familiar to us from elsewhere. The *svābhāvikakāya* is presented as a "basis" or *āśraya* upon which the other two bodies are predicated or grounded. In MSA, *dharmakāya* is closely identified with *āśrayaparāvṛtti* (the latter defines the *dharmakāya*). In RGV, moreover, *āśrayaparāvṛtti* is identified with pure Thusness itself, then with its essence (*svabhāva*), and then equated with the "result" of liberation. In the latter role, it constitutes a kind of substrate or necessary condition for the further unfolding of later members of the sixfold rubric, in whose terms the entire problematic of embodiment is expounded.

It seems clear, then, that the connection to *āśrayaparāvṛtti* is an important component part of these earliest expositions of *trikāya* doctrine, though this connection has been given little attention in analyses of either doctrine to date. On the one hand, this connection is further

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[2640] This identification is only made in the commentarial layer (in the prose), and only made clear in the portion of the text that, by Takasaki's reckoning, actually comes after the exposition of "result" (*phala*), though it actually comprises a kind of bridge between that section and the next: "That is to say, the twofold special knowledge, viz. the transcendent [special knowledge] that is free of discrimination and the [special knowledge] acquired subsequently are the cause of the revolutionary transformation of the basis (*āśrayaparāvṛtti*), which is designated the 'result of liberation'," *yad uta dvividhaṃ lokôttaram avikalpaṃ tatpṛṣṭhalabdhaṃ ca jñānam āśrayaparāvṛtter hetu visaṃyogaphalasaṃjñitāyāḥ*, Johnston 82, Takasaki 318; the sentence then goes on to introduce the fourth category, "function" (*karman*).

evidence in support of my basic contention in Chapter 5.2, that *āśrayaparāvṛtti* is first and foremost a question of embodiment. On the other hand, however, this connection arguably also provides us with an orientation in which we can make better sense of the underlying conceptual thrust of *trikāya* theory, at a level that goes beyond simply describing the three bodies and identifying their sources.

Having hopefully at least established that *āśrayaparāvṛtti* is an important part of the relevant context for interpreting *trikāya* in these texts, however, I will postpone consideration of these implications until towards the end of this analysis, when we will have in hand a fuller understanding of other aspects of their content. In the interim, I will also return below to the question of the connection of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* and the sixfold rubric that forms the context for embodiment doctrine in these texts, when I explore the possibility that MSA, especially, gives us reason to believe that the last member of the rubric, "function" (*vṛtti*), is connected to it. First, however, we need to orient ourselves with a brief look at the exposition of the relevant category in the sixfold rubric in MSA.

5.3.4 The exposition of *trikāya* doctrine under the category of "manifestation" (*vṛtti*) in *Mahāyānasūtrâlaṃkāra*

In MSA, *trikāya* doctrine is presented almost entirely within the confines of the text's treatment of the sixth category of the sixfold rubric, "manifestation" (*vṛtti,* also possibly "elaboration, modes, operation, unfolding").[2641] This category is related by the *kārikā* at MSA 21.61 to the fact

[2641] As with the fourth category, *karman,* it is very difficult here to get a translation that really does justice to the term; see n. 2627. As there, the difficulty here once more hinges on the fact that the term is applied both to the way buddhahood is for itself as well as the way it is for others. Without this difficulty, the translation "manifestation" would be extremely accurate, since the category has to do with the way buddhahood is made manifest. The idea of buddhahood "manifesting" itself to itself strikes me as slightly incongruous, however; buddhahood is intrinsically itself to itself, and need not make itself "manifest" in order to be anything for itself. The intention of the text, however, seems to be to make the

that the Buddha is "beheld in the worlds and assemblies" while in fact remaining "entirely invisible to gods and men". The *Bhāṣya* here explicitly glosses this last notion with reference to the three bodies: the Buddha is visible in the worlds (*lokeṣu*) in his *nirmāṇakāya,* in the "assemblies" (*parṣanmaṇḍaleṣu*) in his *sāṃbhogikakāya,* and he meanwhile in fact remains invisible in his *dharmakāya.*[2642] In this particular passage, the *trikāya* terminology is used only in the *Bhāṣya,* and not in the verses.

However, in Chapter 9, the connection between the category of "manifestation" and *trikāya* is overt even in the verses, beginning at 9.59:

> "It is declared that the purification of the realm of *dharma* (*dharmadhātuviśuddha*) of the Buddhas is differentiated according to manifestation into essential *dharma* (*svabhāva*), enjoyment of the Dharma (*dharmasaṃbhoga*),[2643] and magical emanation (*nirmāṇa*).[2644]
>
> . . . .
>
> "The varieties of the body of embodiment of the Buddhas are: embodiment in the essence; in enjoyment; and in magical emanation also; the first is the basis (*āśraya*) of the other two."[2645]

We will have below occasion to examine further the doctrine of the threefold embodiment in the several succeeding verses and Bh thereto, but this much is enough to make it clear that right back to MSA, the classic triad of embodiments is elaborated primarily under the aegis of

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point that if buddhahood is manifest to others, it is also of course manifest to itself. Despite these difficulties with the term, I use it for want of anything better.

[2642] I confess I find it a little puzzling that buddhahood itself (as expressed in the *svābhāvikakāya*), which I presume would ordinarily be thought of as *nivṛtta,* can also be conceived in terms of *vṛtti;* but this is certainly no more paradoxical than many other (typically Prajñāpāramitā) formulations: "It is precisely in being non-X that the X of the Buddha consists" etc.

[2643] The sense of this term is shown by Bh to 9.60, *sāṃbhogiko yena parṣanmaṇḍaleṣu dharmasaṃbhogaṃ karoti,* Lévi I, 45.

[2644] *svabhāvadharmasaṃbhoganirmāṇair bhinnavṛttikaḥ/ dharmadhātuviśuddho 'yaṃ buddhānāṃ samudāhṛtaḥ,* Lévi MSA I, 44; cf. Lévi MSA II 86, Thurman et al. 95, Makransky 54-56.

[2645] *svābhāviko 'tha sāṃbhogyaḥ kāyo nairmāṇika 'paraḥ/ kāyabhedā hi buddhānāṃ prathamas tu dvayâśrayaḥ,* Lévi MSA 9.60; Lévi II 86, Thurman et. al. 95.

the last of the categories of the sixfold rubric for analysing the absolute, that is, in terms of its manifestation (*vṛtti*).

Elsewhere, however, MSA talks more about *vṛtti* – of various kinds, in fact – and it will be useful to note the features of the context of this other exposition that indicate that basically the same issues are at stake as in the exposition of the sixfold rubric, and further, to note a connection this leads us to between *vṛtti* and *āśrayaparāvṛtti*. Let us look at that other passage.

5.3.5 *Vṛtti* and *āśrayaparāvṛtti* at MSA 9.12-17

MSA 9.12-17[2646] suggests strongly that the category of *vṛtti* ("manifestation") in the context of the sixfold rubric, which we have seen is associated for both texts with the elaboration of the threefold embodiment, is itself in fact closely associated with *āśrayaparāvṛtti*. The identification of this connection requires argument, because the sixfold rubric is not explicitly invoked in these verses. However, there is sufficient reason to think that at least a curtailed version of it underlies the exposition, and that the issues at play are very similar.

First, 9.12 speaks of the attainment of buddhahood as the attainment of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* (*āśrayasyânyathâpti,* glossed as *āśrayaparāvṛtti* by Bh), and as later in the chapter and in RGV 2, this transformation is associated with the twofold *jñāna* (called *nirvikalpa-* and *viṣayasumahat; lokôttarajñāna* and *tatpṛṣthalabdha . . . jñāna* in Bh). As in the other passages we have already examined, further, the discussion of this process in the verse makes reference to a cause of this process, that is, the destruction of the seeds of the twofold obstruction present from beginningless time (*kleśajñeyavṛtīnām satatam anugataṃ bījam utkṛṣtakālam yan nastaṃ . . .*) and

[2646] Lévi MSA I, 35-37; Thurman et al. 78-80. Since the span covered by this passage is so short, I will rely on verse numbers in the following to allow my reader to locate specific details within it, and not needlessly repeat page references.

the attendant attainment of the twofold *jñāna* itself, of which *āśrayaparāvṛtti* is the result. As in those other passages, also, this attainment is said to be "associated (*yuta,* < /*yuj,* cf. *yoga* 'concomitants') with pure *dharmas* and superior qualities (*guṇa*)" (*śukladharmapravaraguṇayutā*). In all these respects, then, the context for the punning exposition of different kinds of *vṛtti* ("manifestation", but here other parts of the semantic range of the word are exploited, including "operation", "vicissitudes", "transformation" etc.) reads like an abbreviated sketch of the context for the exposition of *vṛtti* in the context of the sixfold rubric in our other passages, including references to a number of aspects of the sixfold rubric itself.

At 9.14, then, the text speaks of ten punning senses in which the revolutionary transformation of the Tathāgatas can be understood; the explicit reference to *parivṛtti* (*tathāgatānāṃ parivṛtti*) makes it clear, despite the fact that it is only *vṛtti*[2647] and not *parārvṛtti* or *parivṛtti* that enters into these punning games, that it is various aspects of revolutionary transformation of the basis that is at stake. Bh here also emphasises that it is *āśrayaparāvṛtti* at stake here when it repeats the *tathāgatānāṃ pravṛtti* of the verse, and further by a (somewhat cryptic) reference to the *āśraya.*[2648]

[2647] The names for these different senses are created by adding different prefixes to *vṛtti*, and, one suspects, probably include some resultant words which might have been nonce formations without much meaning outside the present context. Though one can sympathise with the difficulties with which such a passage confronts any translator, the Thurman version, in insisting upon translating *vṛtti* "mutation" in every case without any further indication of other parts of its semantic range, descends into complete incomprehensibility in places here.

[2648] Following immediately after the comment on the third kind of *vṛtti,* viz. *avṛtti,* "non-function/manifestation": together with the brief comment on the third category itself, this reads *saṃkleśahetāv avṛttiḥ/ āśraya iti yo 'sau parivṛttyâśrayas taṃ darśayati.* This category seems to have given the authors of both Western-language translations difficulties. Thurman et al. translate "(These are all) foundational, shown to be foundational transmutations," referring to all the first three categories. Lévi translates "[c'est une Non-fonction, en fait de cause de Plaine-Souillure.] Le Fond désigne le Fond de la Révolution;" II, 72. Neither of these translations makes much sense in context, nor do they pay proper attention to the syntax. Unfortunately, it is difficult to determine precisely what this sentence *does* mean. The comment about *āśraya* is missing entirely from Derge Tib., which merely says *kun nas nyan* [*sic,* for *nyon*] *mongs pa'i rgyu la mi 'jug pas mi 'jug pa'o;* sDe dge bstan 'gyur, *phi* 154b1 (for which I used the TBRC pdf version); this omission might lead us to suspect it is a later commentarial interpolation in one line of the Skt. text. It is found, however, in Prabhākaramitra's Chinese, which reads 三者不轉轉。謂轉依已染

In the context of this passage ringing the semantic changes on *vṛtti,* we find further echoes of the categories that we have already seen at play in the exposition of the sixfold rubric in MSA and RGV. The *parivṛtti* of the Tathāgatas is said to be *pravṛtti* ("pro-manifestation", manifestation to or for) because it is for the sake of others (*parârthavṛtti*), which of course recalls the categories of "for his own sake" and "for the sake of others" that we followed above. An abbreviated reference to "showing" (*darśana*) perfect awakening and *parinirvāṇa* recalls the interpretation of the *nirmāṇakāya* in RGV as primarily the device by which the Buddha makes a docetistic display of the acts or stations of his stereotyped career.[2649] As in our other texts, we also find here the analogy between buddhahood/*āśrayaparāvṛtti* and space, though here the exact nuance differs slightly from the uses of the same conceit in RGV 2's comments on *karman.*[2650]

Perhaps most tellingly, however, the categories of "equal" and "unique/special" (*sama, viśiṣṭa*) are expounded respectively with reference to (1) "liberation" (*vimukti*), which is the same

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污諸因不能轉此依彼依轉故, T1604.603a17-18; "(3) The *vṛtti* of non-*vṛtti*: this means that upon the revolutionary transformation of the basis, the causes of *saṃkleśa* cannot [any longer] make the former basis operate, because of the operation of the latter basis." (Note that the phrase 轉依已, "upon the revolutionary transformation of the basis", seems to be a gloss added in the process of translation to each of the ten categories to make the meaning clearer.) It is clear from this translation that Prabhākaramitra understands this comment on *āśraya* to be saying something specific about the third category, *avṛtti,* and further, that he reads it to be speaking of two kinds of *āśraya,* indicated by the opposition between the pronouns *asau* and *tam* (for *idam,* presumably), as shown by his use of Ch. 此/彼. I cannot see precisely how to read Prabhākaramitra's interpretation out of the Skt. syntax here, but I confess that the Skt. is somewhat opaque to me. In any case, the exact meaning of this comment need not trouble us too much here, where the main point for our purposes is that this comment clearly shows that it is *āśrayaparāvṛtti* (~*pari*~) that is at issue through these comments on *vṛtti.*

[2649] *abhisaṃbodhiparinirvāṇadarśanavṛttyā dvayā vṛttiḥ,* commenting on the category *dvaya* of the verse.

[2650] 9.15. This conceit is here applied to discuss the way *āśrayaparāvṛtti* is present in all beings, as space is present in the multitude of forms (*rūpagaṇeṣu*). The idea here expressed obviously verges very closely upon *tathāgatagarbha* doctrine, and this verse is cited, in fact, in a slightly altered form, at RGV 1.147 (the context of the application of three of the *Tathāgatagarbha-sūtra*'s nine metaphors to *dharmakāya* as *dharmadhātu* and its "outflow" *niṣyanda*); RGV, of course, does not hesitate to make fully explicit the *tathāgatagarbha* implications.

(*sāmānya*) for the Buddha and for Śrāvakas and Arhats, and (2) "the Buddha *dharmas* of the powers, the confidences etc." (*balavaiśāradyâdibhiḥ buddhadharmair*). To anticipate slightly, this clearly echoes the opposition between the *vimuktikāya* and the *dharmakāya,* which we will see below is key to the RGV 2 *śloka's* exposition of the "function" (*karman*) of the twofold *jñāna* as a base for embodiment for self and other, on the one hand, and which on the other we will also note is a rare opposition RGV thus shares with *Saṃdhinirmocana-sūtra* Ch. 10. The use of this opposition in the present context would seem to bring MSA into this same constellation of texts around the opposition between these two concepts. In SdhN 10, further, this opposition is, as here, directly relevant to a distinction between a "common" (*āśrayaparā-*)*vṛtti* and one "special" to the Buddhas and superior to the first; and in RGV 2 also, *āśrayaparāvṛtti,* in its connection to the twofold *jñāna,* is the basic concept under discussion. We will revisit this possible connection below.

To sum up the last two small sections, then, in MSA 9.59 ff., *trikāya* is presented primarily under the auspices of the sixth category in the sixfold rubric, *vṛtti*. Further, at 9.12-17, in a context that echoes important aspects of the structure and content of the sixfold rubric, *vṛtti* is interpreted in a manner which clearly links it to *āśrayaparāvṛtti*, on the one hand, and to the categories of *vimutki*- and *dharmakāya,* which features in the RGV analysis of the problematic of embodiment, on the other. The most important point for us to carry away from this suggestive passage is the hint that *vṛtti,* and therefore perhaps the *trikāya* that is elaborated under its auspices, may be connected to *āśrayaparāvṛtti* in some way. I will return to this important point at the end of this analysis of *trikāya* doctrine as a whole. I will argue that this hint is borne out by a complex pattern of evidence running throughout the text as a whole, and that there is indeed a deep connection, both conceptual and even perhaps historical, between ideas about *āśrayaparāvṛtti* and *trikāya.*

In order to make this argument, however, we need first to lay out all the evidence, and this leads us directly to the heart of the thorniest interpretative difficulties that will occupy us for the bulk of this chapter. We will now plunge into those difficulties, beginning from the odd puzzle posed by the presence at the heart of RGV's doctrine of embodiments of the unusual pairing of *vimuktikāya* and *dharmakāya,* and the vexing question of what it is doing there.

5.3.6 *Trikāya* doctrine in the context of the sixfold rubric of *svabhāva*-cause-result-*karman*-*yoga*-*vṛtti* in the *Ratnagotravibhāga*

We now turn to the most complex part of the analysis of *trikāya* doctrine in this chapter: RGV's treatment of the category of "function" (*karman*) within the sixfold rubric. I begin from what strikes me as the heart of the difficulty in this section, an opposition between the "body of liberation" (*vimuktikāya*) and the *dharmakāya* in the commentarial verses (*śloka*). Beginning from this question requires me to pursue an order of analysis that in places presents the ideas out of the order in which they appear in the text itself, but I hope that this rearrangement will serve to render the analysis clearer in the long run.

Thus, in what follows, I will first present the problem posed by this pair of concepts.

I will then situate the *karman* section within the structural logic of RGV 2 as a whole. First, I will back up, and present some relevant background from earlier parts of RGV 2. I will attempt to show that the concepts at issue here can best be understood in the light of a clear understanding of the overall logic that structures RGV 2 as a whole, and I will therefore offer an interpretation of that logic. We will then turn our attention in the other direction, and look at the way the *karman* section sits within the remainder of the analysis of the second half of the

sixfold rubric, through to nearly the end of RGV 2. I will argue that there are clear indications that the last three members of the sixfold rubric are to be treated as an integral unit, and I will consider the place of the *karman* section within the unit so comprised.

I will then temporarily turn my attention beyond this chapter. First, I will examine concepts related to those at issue here in the *Saṃdhinirmocana-sūtra* and MSA. I will argue that RGV 2, and the opposition between *vimuktikāya* and *dharmakāya* within it, most likely sits in a clear line of development that leads from SdhN to MSA, and that in addition to significant continuities, we can perceive significant shifts in the interpretation of key concepts through the course of this development. Second, following Takasaki, I will examine two significant parallels to the opposition between *vimuktikāya* and *dharmakāya* within RGV itself, in parts of Chapter 1 that also treat the problematic of embodiment. I will argue that these parallels enable us to see more clearly how RGV understands the opposition in the context of its analysis of *karman* in Chapter 2.

Finally, with this complex analysis of the opposition between *vimuktikāya* and *dharmakāya* in hand, I will turn my attention to the comments on *karman* in the earlier layer of the text, the root verses (*kārikā*), and attempt to relate it to the treatment of the same category in the commentary.

5.3.6.1 (*Vi-*)*muktikāya* and *dharmakāya* in the RGV *śloka,* and the place of these concepts in the structural logic of the chapter

The *śloka* here frames the category of *karman* in terms of the *karma* of the twofold *jñāna,* i.e. "special knowledge that is freed from conceptual construction" (*nirvikalpakajñāna*) and "special knowledge subsequent [to the first kind of special knowledge]" (*tatpṛṣṭhalabdhajñāna*). This

relates back to the way RGV 2 analyses the earlier members of the sixfold rubric. Recall that I proposed above that the overall approach to the sixfold rubric here is to see it as representing a kind of gradual (almost Sāṃkhya-like) process whereby the "absolute" unfolds itself out of itself and is realised in the world in various degrees. Within this gradual unfolding, as I noted there, this twofold wisdom is (2) the cause (*hetu*); and *āśrayaparāvṛtti* is (3) the result (*phala*).[2651] The present category of (4) "function" (*karman*) represents a phase of this logical unfolding of the absolute in which buddhahood, thus being (at least apparently) realised in time, begins to "function" (to work or act, *karman*). Thus, the category of *karman* here refers to the action or working of the twofold *jñāna* for the sake of the Buddha himself and also for other beings.

Within this framework, the *śloka* discusses "function" (*karman*) in terms of a twofold division, comprising: (1) the "fulfilment (*pūraṇa*) of the body of liberation" (*muktikāya, vimuktikāya*[2652]) and (2) the "purification (*śodhana*) of the *dharmakāya*".[2653] The category of (*vi-*)*muktikāya* here is especially unexpected, since it does not fit into the "standard" *trikāya* schema. We might well also ask what we are to make of the fact that the text here (as elsewhere) uses the term *dharmakāya* as well as *svābhāvikakāya* – are these different names for the same thing, or labels for embodiments or aspects of embodiment that differ somehow? The first difficulty for the interpretation of RGV's exposition of the category of "function" (*karman*) is thus that of accounting for the use of the terms *vimukti-* and *dharmakāya* here, and deciding what they mean. But there are problems in doing so on both sides of the opposition.

[2651] RGVV following 2.17, Johnston 82, Takasaki 318-319.

[2652] We first get *muktikāya,* and immediately thereafter *vimuktikāya.* I suspect that the variation is nothing more than *metri causa*.

[2653] *karma . . . pūraṇaṃ muktikāyasya dharmakāyasya śodhanam,* 2.21-22a, Johnston 83, Takasaki 320.

The term *dharmakāya* is deceptively familiar from other contexts, but it seems that the way it is being used here is not congruent with some of our usual understanding of its meaning from other contexts. In particular, it is notable that where we normally assume *dharmakāya* to be the most fundamental or foundational of any set of multiple embodiments, here, these two types of embodiment are presented with *vimuktikāya* first and *dharmakāya* following, as if there is something more fundamental about *vimuktikāya.*[2654] This confusing impression is only multiplied by the fact that it seems, from the context, that the difference between the two embodiments listed here is posed in terms of the distinction between what is "for the Buddha's own sake" and "for the sake of others".[2655] The order of presentation would thus make us think that *vimuktikāya* is "for his own sake", and *dharmakāya* "for the sake of others". However, at least so long as *dharmakāya* is thought to be identical to the *svābhāvikakāya* of the text, that is, to the most veritable and intrinsic mode in which buddhahood can be embodied, we would rather expect that *dharmakāya* would be the embodiment "for the Buddha's own sake". Thus, the basic problem in interpreting this terms, in my opinion, is that there seems to be a conflict between (a) the apparent usual implications of the term *dharmakāya*, and (b) the apparent implications of the order in which they are presented, with *vimuktikāya* first and *dharmakāya* following.

[2654] Usually, we would also expect the most fundamental item to be listed first, and this is consistently the practice in other parts of RGV 2.

[2655] This conclusion can only be arrived at by a certain amount of inference, on the following grounds: (1) the prose and *śloka* components of the *Vyākhyā* (commentarial layer) are by the same hand, and we should therefore expect unity of thought among them; (2) the prose introducing the section, prior to 2.18, proposes a twofold division of "function" (*karman*) in terms of *svârtha* and *parârtha* (as we have already seen above, where we have argued that the persistence of this theme is one reason for regarding all of the last three members of the sixfold rubric as an integrated unit); (3) this twofold function is said in its turn to be on the basis of a twofold *jñāna,* and it is congruent with what we understand by the categories of *nirvikalpakajñāna* and *tatpṛṣṭhalabdhajñāna* that the first is the Buddha's gnosis of truth and reality for himself, and the second is what we might call the "pragmatic application" of his gnosis to the task of teaching and saving sentient beings by expedient means (*upāya*); (4) if the *śloka* then here sets about discussing "function" (*karman*) in terms of a twofold division, it is logical to expect it to map somehow onto the categories of this other division that thus runs throughout the context.

The term *vimuktikāya* poses difficult problems too, but for the opposite reason that, rather than being so well-known that we risk imposing upon it senses imported from elsewhere, the term is rather so unusual that we have very few sources for it, and therefore very little to go on in determining what it might mean at all.

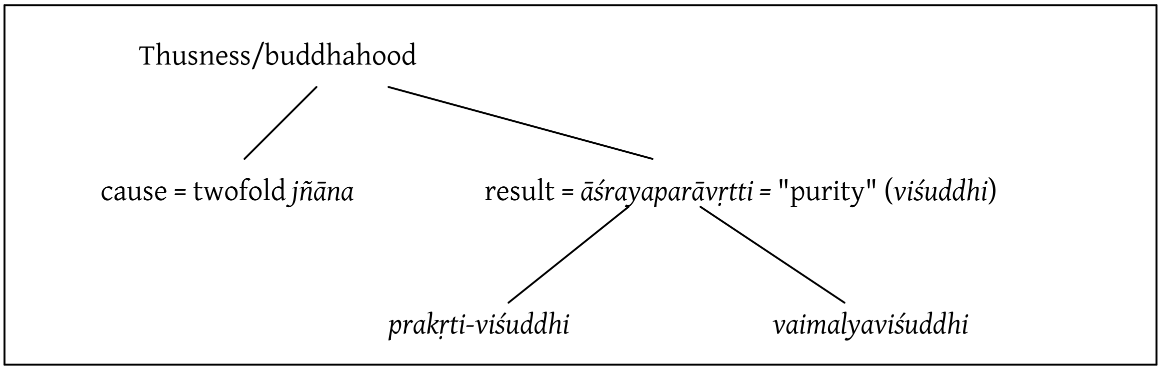
In his translation, notes thereto, and his "Introduction", Takasaki Jikidō provides a number of clues to the interpretation of this opposition, and much of the discussion below of RGV itself will follow and expand on his lead.[2656] Before I begin branching out into material outside RGV itself that I believe adds to the interpretation of the concepts at play here, then, it will be useful to set forth my understanding of Takasaki's interpretation. In the process, it will be abundantly clear that I owe a great deal to his reading of the text.

Takasaki proposes, first, that the opposition be interpreted in the light of statements of the text at its explication of the third category in the sixfold rubric, "result" (*phala*). I believe that he is basically right. There, the "revolutionary transformation of the basis" (*āśrayaparāvṛtti),* is understood as "result", of which the cause (*hetu,* the second category of the sixfold rubric) is the (arising of the) twofold *jñāna* (viz. *nirvikalpakajñāna* and *tatpṛṣṭhalabdhajñāna*).[2657] The text proposes that the essential nature (*svabhāva*) of this *āśrayaparāvṛtti* is "purity" (*viśuddhi*) – meaning the pristine purity of Thusness. As befits the continual ramification by bifurcation that seems to characterise the text's *modus operandi* through this analysis, this purity is then said itself to have two aspects, "innate purity" (*prakṛtiviśuddhi*) and purity resulting from the

[2656] Takasaki does not, however, take into consideration material from outside the text, as we will here.

[2657] Once more, the clearest statement of this relation is actually found retrospectively in the prose introducing "function" (*karman*); *lokôttaram avikalpaṃ tatpṛṣṭhalabdhaṃ ca jñānam āśrayaparivṛtter hetur visaṃyogaphalasaṃjñitāḥ,* already cited n. 2640.

removal of taints (*vaimalyaviśuddhi*). Thus, to summarise, the text proposes (thus far) the following relations among the following sets of categories:[2658]



The second of the two categories into which *viśuddhi* is divided, *vaimalyaviśuddhi* or "purity [resulting from] the removal of taints", is glossed briefly, in a rather gnomic utterance, by saying "purification [resulting from] the removal of taints [is characterised by both] liberation and dissociation" (*vaimalyaviśuddhir vimuktir visaṃyogaś ca*).[2659] This pronouncement is to be understood, as Takasaki rightly perceives, in contrast to the definition of *prakṛtiviśuddhi* immediately preceding, which says, "innate purity [is characterised by] liberation but not dissociation" (*prakṛtiviśuddhir yā vimuktir na ca visaṃyogaḥ*).[2660] In other words, in the state of innate purity, Thusness is in fact free of (liberated from, *vimukti*) adventitious taints, but it is still "associated with" them, which is the text's way of saying that taints (passion and ignorance) appear in conjunction with it and obscure it. In the resultative state of purity resulting from removal of taints, however, Thusness is not only free of adventitious taints in virtue of its innate and inalienable purity, but it has also been "dissociated from" adventitious taints, that is, they have been removed from it entirely and no longer appear at all. Takasaki thus translates

[2658] Johnston 80, Takasaki 315-316.

[2659] Johnston 80.

[2660] Johnston 80.

the gloss on *vaimalyaviśuddhi* as "[that which is] essentially free and actually, too, liberated from [all pollutions]".[2661]

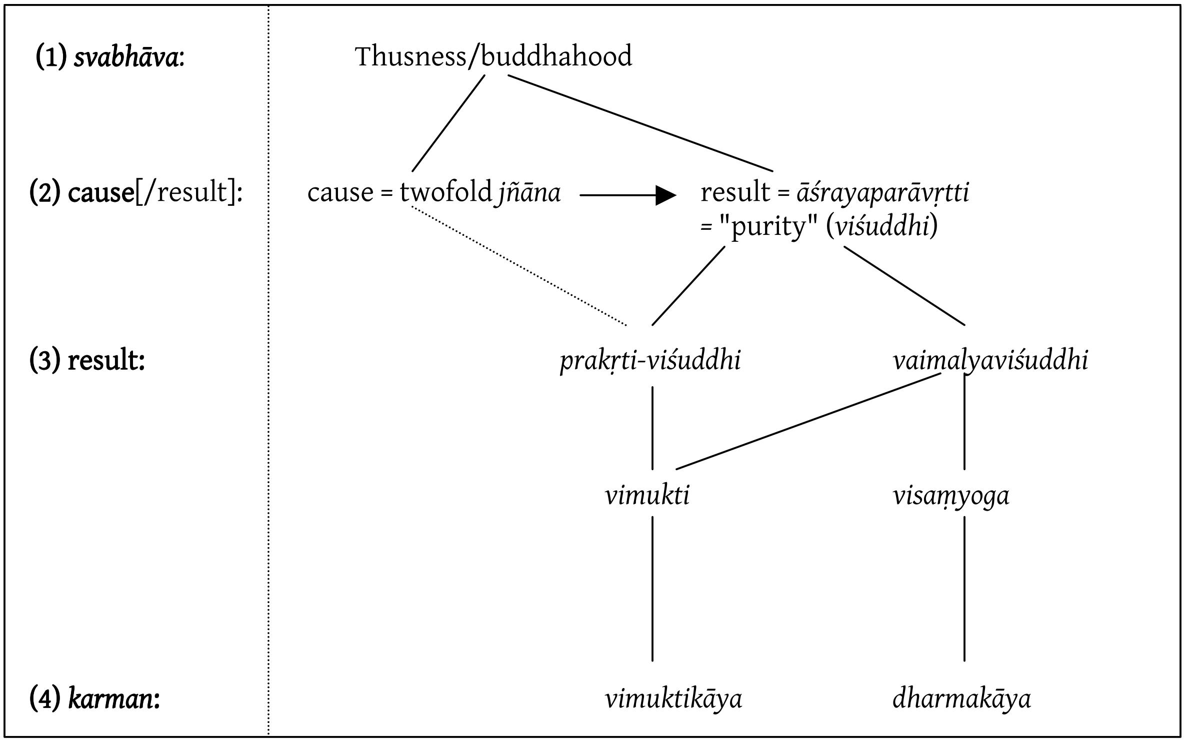
Here we get back to the relevance of this discussion to the distinction between *vimuktikāya* and *dharmakāya* under the head of the category of "function" later in the same chapter (RGV 2). Takasaki sees *vimukti* as "the characteristic common to *samalā* and *nirmalā tathatā*" and *visaṃyoga* as "the characteristic unique to *bodhi*", respectively.[2662] In other words, Takasaki understands that *vimukti* and *visaṃyoga* here represents another bifurcation, this time in the concept of *viśuddhi*, into two aspects, one fundamental, always adequate to itself, and unchanging, and the other a realisation in time of the first through the process leading to awakening (here conceived of as *vaimalya,* "the removal of taints"). He then maps these two aspects onto *vimuktikāya* and *dharmakāya* respectively. In this light, then, (1) a difference between innate and resultative purity maps onto (2) a difference in the mode of their realisation, whereby innate realisation is always already liberated or "free of" taints which are nonetheless associated with it, and resultative realisation entails the removal of the adventitious association with the taints. This distinction in turn maps onto (3) a difference in the way buddhahood "functions" (*karman*), which is conceived of in terms of the corporeal conceit. Aboriginal, eternal and unchanging buddhahood is always already embodied in its own aboriginal freedom (*vimukti*) from defilements, on the one hand; on the other hand, the realisation of buddhahood in time entails in an equal sense the realisation of an embodiment in *dharma* (which here therefore takes on an emphasis of *realised* truth).

[2661] Takasaki 316.

[2662] Takasaki, *Study* 320 n. 56.

In order to understand the real thrust of this reading, it is important to see that the bifurcation between *vimuktikāya* and *dharmakāya* is part of a perceptible pattern running in RGV 2 throughout the elaboration of the first four categories in the sixfold rubric (i.e. *svabhāva*-cause-result-*karman-yoga-vṛtti*). I already sketched part of this logic in the diagram above. The ramification of the categories of the sixfold rubric proceeds by a stepwise process of repeated bifurcation, whereby one member of each new binary opposition is more fundamental or aboriginal, and the other more posterior and resultative. In each case, the point of the opposition seems to be to make the repeated point that despite the surface distinctions that are introduced at each step by the progressive ramification of the rubric, we are not to forget that the underlying reality or essence is never alienated from itself or divided, but retains its integrity and adequacy to itself and is unaffected by these more superficial developments. For example, it may well be the case that one point of view requires that we admit the notion of the acquisition of buddhahood in time, despite the fact that it is, in its essence, underlyingly timeless, beginningless, etc; thus we understand that *āśrayaparāvṛtti* is in some sense a "result" of the twofold *jñāna* as a "cause". However, the text reminds us, it also has a dimension whereby it is aboriginally pure, and has never been sullied such that any process of "pur*ification*" could take place (*prakṛtiviśuddhi*).

The twofold division between *vimuktikāya* and *dharmakāya* within the category of *karman* is thus merely the next step in the text's progressive series of ramifying bifurcations, which extends the sixfold rubric into the next category, thus:



Briefly, the moral of this story is: purity is aboriginal, and yet at the same time, requires realisation; buddhahood, which is identical with this purity, is also both aboriginal and genuinely realised in time; where we speak of the "function" of buddhahood in terms of a notion of embodiment, then, we say that on the one hand, the buddhahood is embodied in aboriginal purity i.e. freedom from taints (*vimuktikāya*), but on the other, that buddhahood is embodied in its realisation of that same purity, i.e. of the absolute, i.e. of *dharma* (*dharmakāya*).

This analysis is confirmed by a close reading of the RGVV's prose introduction before 2.18, which I will argue below should be interpreted as introducing all three members of the latter half of the sixfold rubric (function/*karman*, concomitants/*yoga*, manifestation/*vṛtti*). Where this introductory passage speaks of realisation "for the Buddha's own sake", it speaks not only in terms of a *dharmakāya,* but specifically of a *dharmakāya* that is attained *because of a liberation* (*vimokṣād,* noting that *vimokṣa* < *vi/muc,* the same root as *vimukti; vimokṣa* and *vimukti* are

cognates and synonyms).[2663] This "liberation" is further spoken of as liberation from the "obstructions" (*āvaraṇa*), which is entirely consistent with the discussion, under the head of the preceding category of "result", of aboriginal liberation or freedom as being free of "taints" (*mala*). Thus, the category of *viśuddhi* ("purification") in whose terms *vimukti* was first elaborated was *itself* a result (in the guise of *āśrayaparāvṛtti,* the result *phala* of the twofold *jñāna* as cause *hetu*). In the opposition between *vimuktikāya* and *dharmakāya,* however, *vimuktikāya* is a category under the aegis of which the text's ongoing analysis resumes and carries forward the preceding category of "cause" or "ground", and *dharmakāya* is conceived of as a further result.

This, however, is in also entirely consistent with the ongoing structure of stepwise ramification that has already been set in motion in earlier parts of the text, whereby each step in the ongoing process of ramification or Sāṃkhya-like unfolding of categories entails the genesis of a result, which in its own turn becomes the ground for a further step. Alternatively, we might say that a new layer or dimension that is added by ramification to the one fundamental ground underlying the whole process. Thus, the "essence" of buddhahood and reality is of course complete and sufficient in itself, and even when it is obscured by ignorance, its own intrinsic nature does not change. When gnosis is added to the picture, however, something does change, and in this perspective buddhahood can be regarded as attainable in time, and gnosis (the twofold *jñāna*) is thus regarded as the cause of the process of attainment of buddhahood (*hetu,* the second category in the sixfold rubric). To this twofold gnosis as cause, however, corresponds *āśrayaparāvṛtti* as effect, leading us to the third category of the rubric, "result".

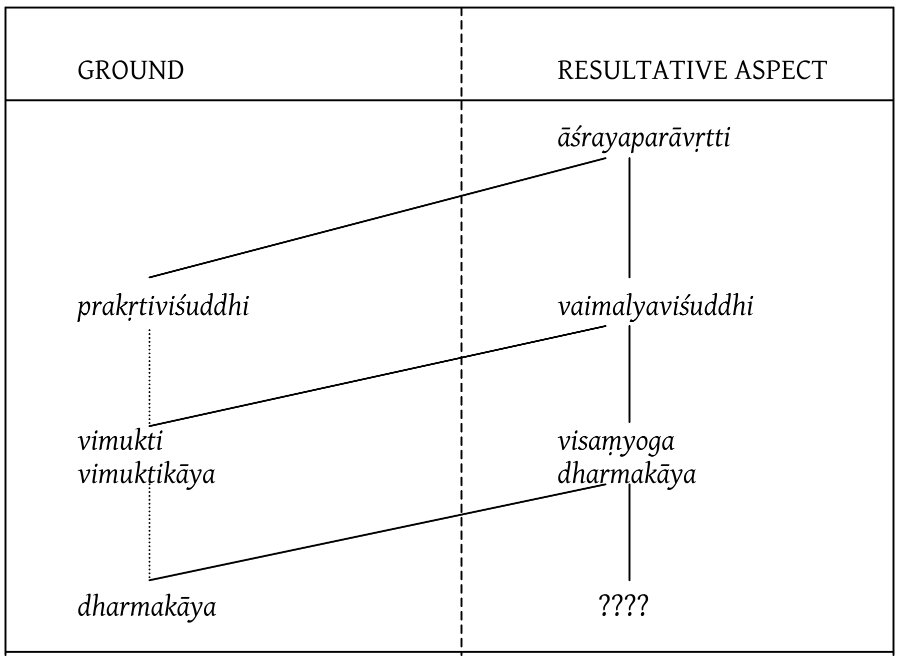
This "result", however, reconsidered in its relation to the "absolute" in its own terms and independent of the gnosis that produces it (in a kind of "objective" viewpoint, as it were),

[2663] See also below, n. 2683.

appears as a kind of purification of that absolute (Thusness) from adventitious defilements (*viśuddhi*). The text accordingly speaks of it as "purification". Once more to emphasise that this apparent process of purification does not impinge upon truth and reality in itself, the text notes that the purity or purification of the "absolute" can also be conceived from two points of view: (1) the perspective of the absolute in and of itself, in which perspective purity is aboriginal and no active purification is required; (2) the point of view of the apparent attainment of buddhahood in time, in which perspective purification can be considered as the removal of adventitious taints or defilements. In this perspective, "purification" is a dimension of, and identical with, the ultimate ground itself, and thus, at the fourth category of the rubric, it is reconceived in its turn as the ground (*vimuktikāya*) of a corporeal realisation of the truth (*dharmakāya*) that is the "function" (*karman*) of buddhahood when it is realised.

In other words, at each step in this dialectical exposition, the regular bifurcation of each new category in the rubric proceeds from the intersection of two questions: (1) How does the last category in the sixfold rubric appear as an inalienable dimension of the ultimate ground? and (2) What new aspect of buddhahood is elaborated out of this new dimension of the ground? At each step in the elaboration of the rubric, answering these questions has a dual effect. On the one hand, and more obviously, it throws out new phenomenal ramifications of buddhahood in time, that is, in the world: successively, buddhahood as an effect or result attained in time, *tatpṛṣthalabdhajñāna, vaimalyaviśuddhi,* etc. On the other hand, however, it also has the effect of adding at each step a further layer to our understanding of buddhahood-cum-Thusness as the ultimate ground of this process: successively, as an essence entirely adequate unto itself, as the cause of attainment, as *nirvikalpakajñāna,* as *prakṛtiviśuddhi* etc.

In this ongoing dialectic, the first motor to ramification or elaboration (the "cause") is provided by the twofold gnosis, and especially *nirvikalpakajñāna,* i.e. knowing reality, which is identical to buddhahood itself, precisely as it is. In this act of gnosis, reality-cum-buddhahood takes on a dual aspect of the known object of gnosis on the one hand, and the knower on the other. This twofold gnosis of buddhahood-cum-reality as cause produces *āśrayaparāvṛtti* as result. This triggers the reiterative process of further resultative ramifications, each redounding to imply further aspects of the ground:



As the lower reaches of this diagram show, the implication of this reiterative process is that at category (4) *karman, dharmakāya,* as the resultative aspect of the most recent bifurcation into new dimension of the ground and its result, should nonetheless in its own turn be regarded from another perspective as still an aspect of ground. In that capacity, it ground should ground a further dialectical product.[2664] To anticipate, I believe that this is in fact the case, and that *dharmakāya* is here regarded as an umbrella category describing the Buddha's realised

[2664] Cf. Makransky's emphasis of the close identity between *dharmakāya* as it enters into the sixth member of the rubric and *svabhāva* as the first member of the rubric, *Buddhahood Embodied,* 53.

embodiment ("realised" in opposition to the innate embodiment of *vimuktikāya*) that grounds and includes within itself all three members of the *trikāya* rubric, which are introduced at the elaboration of the sixth member of the sixfold rubric, "manifestation".[2665]

To support this contention, however, I must yet lay out a range of further textual evidence. As the first step in this process, we now consider the way the categories of "for the Buddha's own sake" (*svârtha*) and "for the sake of others" (*parârtha*) operate in RGVV and MSA. We will see that this apparently innocuous or marginal category in the analysis is an issue upon which even different versions of MSA differ from one another; that it is a point upon which RGV differs from MSA (which might explain how divergent views crept back into MSA itself); that it caused trouble to traditional commentators (due, we might suspect, to the discrepancies between MSA and RGV); and that it has also given trouble to modern translators (probably for all the above reasons!).

5.3.6.2 *Svârtha* vs. *parârtha* in MSA

A useful key in further unravelling the complex presentation of the doctrine of bodies in RGV lies in a second puzzle: the way RGV speaks of the two categories of "for [the Buddha's] own sake" (*svârtha*) and "for the sake of others" (*parârtha*). I will argue that this is one respect in which there is a significant difference between (most versions of) MSA and RGV, and further, that attention to this difference ultimately enables us to discern the outline of a key ongoing conceptual development – a process of ever-increasing docetisation of worldly bodies – through the short lineage of ideas we are tracing here through SdhN, MSA and RGV successively.

[2665] This obviously implies that, contrary to later understandings that were to collapse them into one another, *dharmakāya* and *svābhāvikakāya* are not truly identical, a point to which we will return below.

Turning first to MSA, the ground for the opposition between the Buddha's embodiment "for his own sake" and "for the sake of others" is already prepared in some key differences in the presentation of earlier members of the sixfold rubric from the way the same categories are presented in RGV as analysed above. In order to appreciate this difference fully, we need to back up a little and see how MSA treats all the preceding members of the rubric.

These differences begin even at the first term in the rubric, *svabhāva.* In RGV, the "absolute" is presented primarily under the guise of buddhahood, and its *svabhāva* is said only to be "purity" (*viśuddhi*). In MSA, the "absolute" is presented under a more "objective" aspect of the *dharmadhātu.* In fact, the "absolute" here is conceived in terms of a fundamental purity also, but this purity is wrapped up into the very category in terms of which the absolute is analysed, that is, *dharmadhātuviśuddhi,* "the purity of the *dharma*-realm".

Within the frame set by this foundational difference of perspective, *svabhāva* is understood as defined by two aspects: the "Thusness comprised by the purification of all things from the twofold obstruction" (*sarvadharmadvayâvaratathatāśuddhi*); and as a somewhat problematic "indestructible power over special gnosis of things and the objects of that [gnosis?]".[2666] It seems apparent that insofar as the first aspect of this definition of *svabhāva* is concerned, MSA and RGV are quite close, but the second aspect is entirely unparalleled in RGV. This is especially notable because in MSA another twofold gnosis is missing, viz. *nirvikalpakajñāna* and *tatpṛṣṭhalabdhajñāna,* which as we have seen RGV considers as the "cause" of [the attainment in time of] buddhahood. We might thus suspect that RGV has extracted this aspect of the

[2666] *vastujñānatadālambavaśitâkṣaya,* 9.56. To this Bh is singularly unhelpful, doing little more than rearranging the word order and breaking the compound: *vastutadālambanajñānayor akṣayavaśitā . . .* Lévi I, 44. Thurman et al. attempt to translate this after later commentarial readings by Sthiramati and dBal Mang, 93-94 n. 78. It seems apparent from the discussion there that the content of this concept was never entirely clear, and I will not pursue the point for present purposes.

svabhāva of the "absolute" and relegated it, under a revised conceptual guise, to the role of the second member of the sixfold rubric.

Next, the second category of "cause" also differs. Whereas in RGV it is the twofold *jñāna* that is the cause, in MSA it is "intensive *cultivation* of special knowledge of Thusness in all respects".[2667] This is another significant difference in emphasis. *Jñāna* itself is the cause itself in RGV, but here, *jñāna,* having already featured as an aspect of *svabhāva,* must be further *cultivated* in order to lead to buddhahood. It may not be going too far to see in this detail a replacement of a more gradualist paradigm in MSA with a subitist model in RGV, a replacement which further entails, it seems, a stronger emphasis on pure gnosis in RGV vs. practice in MSA.[2668]

At the exposition of the third category of "result", which also differs from what we have seen in RGV, the problem of "benefit" enters into the equation. In RGV the "result" of dual gnosis as cause is *āśrayaparāvṛtti,* understood (somewhat redundantly with *svabhāva*) as "purification" or "purity". In MSA, by contrast, it is understood to be "the indestructibility of the twofold support (*ādhāna*) for the welfare and happiness of sentient beings (*satvāṇāṃ hitasukha*) in all respects".[2669] While this formulation is brief and obscure, it seems likely to me that it refers

[2667] *sarvatas tathatājñānabhāvanā,* 9.57ab, Lévi I, 44.

[2668] In a possible connection to the ideas of SdhN 10 (see below), Bh glosses the idea of "intensively cultivating" that special gnosis "in all respects" as meaning "through all the points of entry provided by Dharma discourses" (*sarvadharmaparyāyamukhair*), in other words, as referring to exhaustive study in the teachings. In connection with *āśrayaparāvṛtti* and an apparent precursor of the doctrine of embodiment as it is worked out in MSA and RGV, SdhN 10 seems to understand the acquisition of the *dharmakāya* as similarly connected to the acquisition of mastery over the teachings.

[2669] *sarvasatvadvayâdhānasarvathā 'kṣayatā phalaṃ,* 9.57cd*; sarvasatvānāṃ sarvathā hitasukhadvayâdhānâkṣayatā,* Lévi I, 44. Thurman et al. read this "twofold support" as referring to the twofold equipment (*saṃbhāra*) of the Buddha, which features explicitly in the text's gloss of the fifth member of the rubric, *yoga* ("concomitants"). However, I cannot see what their reason is for doing so, and it seems somewhat redundant. They also, so far as I can tell, do not actually translate the word *ādhāna* in either instance, but it strikes me that, as a word meaning "cause" and a close synonym of "support" (*āśraya*), this term may be important.

forward to the exposition of the idea of the Buddha's work "for the sake of other sentient beings". The fact that the text here speaks of a "twofold support" may be echoed in RGV's idea, which we will examine below, that work for the benefit of others is grounded in a twofold embodiment. However, as we will see immediately, if this is the case, it does not accord with the idea of the connection between "for the sake of others" and *trikāya* in any version of MSA but the Tibetan, and thus presents something of a puzzle.

We will return to the implications of these differences between MSA and RGV in the early members of the sixfold rubric below.

Passing for the moment over the exposition of the fourth and fifth members of the rubric,[2670] "function" (*karman*) and "concomitants" (*yoga*), MSA comes to the exposition of its doctrine of *trikāya* in 9.60 ff. There, Bh says immediately of *nairmāṇikakāya* only that it is "that magical emanation by means of which [the Buddhas] work for the sake of sentient beings".[2671] This leads us straight to the heart of the question, where we find ourselves confronted with a textual problem.

In the following verses (9.61-63), the text speaks of the each of the three bodies individually, though oddly enough, it does so out of order, treating *sāṃbhogikakakāya* first, *svābhāvikakāya* next, and then *nairmāṇikakāya*. In a related problem, at 9.63, when it treats *nairmāṇikakāya,* the text also comes to the problem of the opposition between "for the Buddha's own sake" and "for the sake of others". However, its pronouncements on the question are ambiguous. The verse says, "The immeasurable magical emanation of the Buddha is considered [his] magical-

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[2670] See p. 1281.

[2671] *nairmāṇiko yena nirmāṇena satvârthaṃ karoti,* 9.60 Bh, Lévi 45.

emanation body. *The accomplishment of all manner of* [works for] *the sake of both* [the Buddha himself and others] *is based upon* (*pratiṣṭhita*) *these two*."[2672]

The problem is, of course – What are the "two" referred to here? What is the basis of the accomplishment of the ends of the Buddha himself and works for the sake of others, respectively? The simplest reading, given the order in which the three bodies are treated, would be to think that "two" refers to the last two bodies presented, that is, the *svābhāvikakāya* and the *nairmāṇikakāya*, leaving the *sāṃbhogikakāya* out in the cold and undefined. However, at least three obstacles lie in the path to such an interpretation.

First, the stance of the text on the question is rendered ambiguous by the fact that the text mixes up the notion of *saṃbhoga,* "enjoyment", with its treatment of the *svābhāvikakāya,* saying, "The embodiment in essence is considered equal, subtle, and integrated with that [*sāṃbhogikakāya*]; when Buddhas display enjoyment at their pleasure, it is the cause of mastery over enjoyment."[2673] Thus, although the most proximate embodiment discussed prior to the *nairmāṇikakāya* is the *svābhāvikakāya,* it is discussed in a manner that entangles it closely with the *sāṃbhogakāya,* opening up the possibility that the *sāṃbhogikakāya* could also be meant as one of "these two".

Second, in most versions of the text, Bh following the verses specifically identifies "these two" as the *sāṃbhogikakāya* and the *nairmāṇikakāya* respectively.[2674] To add to the confusion, the

[2672] *ameyaṃ buddhanirmāṇaṃ kāyo nairmāṇiko mataḥ/ dvayor dvayârthasaṃpattiḥ sarvākārā pratiṣṭhitā*, Lévi I, 45.

[2673] *samaḥ sūkṣmaś ca tacchiṣṭaḥ kāyaḥ svābhāviko mataḥ/ saṃbhogavibhutāhetur yathêṣṭaṃ bhogadarśane,* 9.62, Lévi I, 45.

[2674] The translation of Thurman et al. is a catalogue of confusing errors on this point. Their translation of the text of Bh here reads, "Thus the (emanation body as the) fulfillment of the two aims rests,

Tibetan version of the text alone differs at this point, identifying the "two" as **svābhāvikakāya* and *sāṃbhogikakāya* respectively![2675]

Third, though this may be a minor point, Sthiramati reportedly glosses the "activities" (*kriyā*) of the *sāṃbhogikakāya* at 9.61 by saying "such as accomplishing the aims of beings".[2676] This would mean, of course, that the *sāṃbhogikakāya* would be the basis for work for works "for the sake of others". Sthiramati is thus consistent with the reading of the Tibetan text just mentioned, though inconsistent with the reading attributed to Sthiramati by Thurman et al. at 9.63, on the very next page.[2677]

Thus, it seems that even within the transmission of the text of MSA itself, there are *two different positions* on what body comprises the basis for works "for the Buddha's own sake" and "for the

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respectively, on the two, *the truth body and the beatific body*", 96; and they claim in n. 86 that this reading follows the Skt., Ch. and Sthiramati. However, Skt. actually reads *evaṃ dvayârthasaṃpattir yathākramaṃ dvayoḥ pratiṣṭitā sāṃbhogike ca kāye nairmāṇike ca,* which should read (to follow their translation in other respects) "Thus, the fulfillment of the two aims rests respectively on the two, *the beatific body* (body of enjoyment) *and the emanation body*." I do not have access the Sthiramati's sub-commentary at the time of writing, but this reading is also borne out by the Chinese: 如此二利。一切種成就故。次第建立食身及化身, T1604.606b29-c01 (note, also, *not* at 606c28 as they would have it). Thurman et al. then state further, in n. 86, that the Derge Tib. "has *rang bzhin gyi sku* (*svābhāvikakāya*) *for sāṃbhogika"*, but this is also doubly wrong. Tib. in fact reads *don gnyis phun sum tshogs pa de yang rang bzhin gyi sku dang/ longs spyod rdzogs pa'i sku dang/ gnyis la go rims bzhin du gnas so,* sDe dge bstan 'gyur, *phi* 159b4, i.e. it thinks the two bodies upon which the fulfilment of the two aims is based are the **svābhāvikakāya* and the **sāṃbhogikakāya* respectively. Thus, it is *neither* correct to say (1) that Tib. substitutes **svābhāvikakāya* for *sāṃbhogikakāya* in the text as it is given in their mistaken translation, which would mean it gave **dharmakāya* and **svābhāvikakāya* (!?); nor (2) that it substitutes **svābhāvikakāya* for *sāṃbhogikakāya* in the text as it is indeed found in Skt. and Ch., which would mean it gave **svābhāvikakāya* and **nairmāṇikakāya.* When we correct for these various mistakes, Thurman et al. *should* say: (1) that in most versions, the fulfilment of the two aims rests on the *sāṃbhogikakāya* and *nairmāṇikakāya,* and they should thus translate accordingly in Bh text; (2) that Tib. alone gives rather **svābhāvikakāya* and **nairmāṇikakāya*.

[2675] Cited in n. 2674 immediately above.

[2676] Thurman et al., 95 and n. 83, following Nagao's reading of Sthiramati.

[2677] Thurman et al. 96 n. 86! If the *sāṃbhogikakāya* works to accomplish the "aims of beings" (= *sattvârtha*), then it must logically fall under the head of *parârtha,* "for the sake of others", which logically excludes it being the body that is the basis for work "for the sake of the Buddha himself".

sake of others". Moreover, these positions are distributed in a confusing pattern. The confusion here is legion, but whatever the original version of Bh might have said, it is notable that *neither* of these versions of the text agree with what I have just suggested would be the most intuitive understanding, that is, that neither version gives *svābhāvikakāya* and *nairmāṇikakāya* as bases of works for the sake of self and others respectively. What are we to make of these bizarre textual facts?

I have already said above that I believe the most natural reading of the verses on their own would be that the two bodies upon which are based manifestation "for the Buddha's own sake" and "for the sake of others" are the *svābhāvikakāya* and the *nairmāṇikakāya* respectively. However, rather than attempting the probably futile task of determining what the supposed original intent of the text might have been, it seems a more feasible task to me to try and account for the reasons for the confusion that has arisen around this point. First, as we saw, 9.63 does not actually identify the two bodies comprising the twofold basis by name, which leaves the door open for various interpretations. Second, as we also saw, the *svābhāvikakāya* and the *sāṃbhogikakāya* are closely intertwined in the way the text presents *svābhāvikakāya.* Given that, on the account of the text, the *svābhāvikakāya* and the *sāṃbhogikakāya* seems to be in a close relation of quasi-identity, I suggest that it perhaps does not make such a huge difference, within the terms of the text itself, whether it is the *svābhāvikakāya* or the *sāṃbhogikakāya* that is the basis for the Buddha's works and manifestation "for his own sake", since whichever one is that basis, the other will also be closely involved. We can thus suppose a situation in which, whichever body the text might have supposed was the basis for works "for the Buddha's own sake", it is at least fairly clear that the *nairmāṇikakāya* is the basis of works "for the sake of others".

If this is the case, then, how are we to account for the Tibetan version of the text, in which the *sāṃbhogikakāya* is the basis of works "for the sake *of others*", and the *nairmāṇikakāya* is left out of the equation altogether? It seems to me that this odd shift in the text is unlikely to be the product of sheer chance, and rather betrays two key ambiguities at the very inception of *trikāya* doctrine around the question of "sake" or "benefit": (1) in the status of the *svābhāvikakāya*; and (2) in the status of the *sāṃbhogikakāya*.

> (1) On the *sāṃbhogikakāya-nairmāṇikakāya* majority reading of MSABh, i.e. the probable oldest comment on the text, *sāṃbhogikakāya* is "for the Buddha's own sake", but *svābhāvikakāya* is left out of account altogether. This suggests that on this understanding, the Buddha's most intrinsic embodiment is not "for" any sake at all. This might indicate a rather severely abstract attitude to the underlying corporeal conceit itself, in which *svābhāvikakāya* is almost "an embodiment that is not an embodiment", that is, an embodiment that does not actually "body forth" the Buddha *for* anyone at all, not even himself.
>
> On the other hand, on the minority *svābhāvikakāya-sāṃbhogikakāya* reading of the Derge, the *svābhāvikakāya* itself is taken as a genuine embodiment of the Buddha "for" the Buddha's own sake, with the possible implication of a more robust understanding of the corporal conceit.
>
> (2) On the *sāṃbhogikakāya-nairmāṇikakāya* majority reading of MSABh, where the *sāṃbhogikakāya* is "for the Buddha's own sake", there seems to be an impetus to acknowledge that there is in fact a form in which the Buddha gets to "enjoy" his own

> embodiment, that is, a veritable form in which the Buddha is palpably embodied at least for his own "consumption" (*saṃbhoga*!).
>
> On the other hand, on the minority *svābhāvikakāya-sāṃbhogikakāya* reading of the Derge, where *sāṃbhogikakāya* is "for the sake of others", both the *sāṃbhogikakāya* and the *nairmāṇikakāya* are effectively regarded as expedients. This suggests a much more strongly docetistic reading of all possibilities for the Buddha's palpable embodiments (a reading which is borne out, for instance, by the hint in both v. and Bh. at 9.62 that the Buddhas' enjoyment is a "show", *bhogadarśana*[2678]).

We should note, further, that on neither reading do these various implications necessarily sit easily with one another. Rather, that each reading seems to retain at its core a key tension. In the case of the majority *sāṃbhogikakāya-nairmāṇikakāya* reading, the exclusion of the *svābhāvikakāya* from consideration in terms of the very category of "ends" or "for the sake of" (*artha*) seems to indicate a suspicion of the applicability of the corporeal conceit to the "absolute" in its own terms. At the same time, the interpretation of "for the Buddha's own sake" seems to indicate a drive to acknowledge the necessity of a more robust form of veritable embodiment of the Buddha at least for himself. In the case of the minority *svābhāvikakāya-sāṃbhogikakāya* reading of the Derge, the identification of *svābhāvikakāya* as "for the Buddha's own sake" seems to indicate a willingness to admit the corporeal conceit to the very inner sanctum of conceptions of buddhahood. At the same time, this seems to be offset by the idea that even the *sāṃbhogikakāya,* far less the *nairmāṇikakāya,* is not really intrinsic to the Buddha, that is, by the increased emphasis on docetism in the understanding of all palpable embodiments. Thus, these ambiguities in the notions of *svābhāvikakāya* and *sāṃbhogikakāya*

[2678] Lévi I, 45.

reveal a conflict, one way or another in either interpretation, between (1) an impetus towards "full-blooded" tangible embodiment (in the idea, shared by both readings, that *some* form of embodiment must be for the Buddha's own benefit), and (2) the intuition that the very notion of embodiment somehow runs against the grain of what is meant by buddhahood, such that it is not coherent to imagine the Buddha veritably embodied in any strong sense (the exclusion of *svābhāvikakāya* entirely from the rubric of "the sake of"; the more docetistic reading of any palpable embodiments).

I suggest that, viewed in this light, the instability in the text of the MSA around this problem is no product of chance, but rather a betrayal of a deep problem inherent to the very idea of the embodiment of transcendence, which I will call in the Conclusion to this dissertation as a whole the "antinomy of immanence". To anticipate, the problem is that genuine immanence (and therefore embodiment, as a powerful trope for and vehicle of immanence) is both necessary and impossible: necessary, because without it, there can be no access to the transcendent (*lokôttara,* "the sacred" etc.) for ordinary worldlings, and therefore no salvation; impossible, because immanence by definition means being in the world, which axiomatically renders the immanent transcendent no longer transcendent. I will argue further in the Conclusion to this section that the *trikāya* model, rather than representing a flawless and stable final consummation of all "problems" or contradictions in the doctrine of embodiment in Buddhism, rather bound up at its heart key tensions that had animated doctrinal development before it, in the form of this "antinomy of immanence". In a postface to this chapter arguing against the teleological reading of *trikāya* as the natural endpoint of interesting development in ideas about the multiple Buddha-bodies, I will further argue that these key tensions continued to drive further doctrinal ferment through subsequent ages, so that at best, *trikāya* represented a kind of "stable instability", riven always along the internal faultlines mapped by these tensions.

Further splits in supposedly unary bodies could be precipitated on repeated occasions, as in fact they were.

If my reading of the way the fabric of textual transmission here warps around this problem of "for the Buddha's own sake" and "for the sake of others" is correct, *trikāya* doctrine was already at its very inception internally riven by the key tension represented by the "antinomy of immanence". Little wonder, then, if we also find, when we turn to RGV, that these categories seem to wobble further, to continue to dog efforts at interpretation, and perhaps waver somewhat even within the text itself.

To step back from the largest levels of generalisation to which the considerations of the previous paragraphs have led us, it seems fairly clear that, if we except the single anomaly reflected in the Tibetan text, the majority tradition of transmission shows clearly that for MSA and Bh, *nairmāṇikakāya* alone was "for the sake of others" – on this point all evidence agrees – and either *svābhāvikakāya, sāṃbhogikakāya,* or a kind of integrated combination of the two was "for the Buddha's own sake". In other words, only in the anomalous testimony of the Tibetan version is *sāṃbhogikakāya* ever considered to be "for the sake of the Buddha himself". When we turn to RGV, however, we find that it is the *dharmakāya* that is "for the Buddha's own sake", while the *sāṃbhogikakāya* is quite unambiguously regards as "for the sake of others". We now turn to the consideration of this point in RGV 2, which we will ultimately relate back to the interpretation of the opposition of *vimuktikāya* and *dharmakāya* from which we departed.

5.3.6.3 *Svârtha* vs. *parârtha* in RGV, and the last three categories in the sixfold rubric as a single unit

In the course of the preceding discussion of the opposition between what is "for the Buddha's own sake" and "for the sake of others" in MSA, we have seen that the idea of "for the sake of others" is briefly anticipated in the idea that the third category of "result" entails be "the indestructibility of the twofold support (*ādhāna*) for the welfare and happiness of sentient beings (*satvāṇāṃ hitasukha*) in all respects".[2679] Otherwise, however, it is discussed only in connection with the *trikāya,* which comes (as in RGV) under the head of "manifestation" (*vṛtti*), the sixth member of the sixfold rubric.

In RGV, by contrast, the categories of "for his own sake" and "for the sake of others" are apparently brought into play already from the exposition of the fourth category, "function" (*karman*). Further, it is clear from the way these categories are expounded that they are immediately related in some way to the problematic of various embodiments: they are said, immediately upon their introduction, to refer respectively to the attainment of the *dharmakāya* (*dharmakāyaprāpti*) and the "manifestation by means of a twofold embodiment (*kāyadvayena*)" of the "twofold mastery of demonstration and teaching" (*kāyadvayena saṃdarśanadeśanāvibhutvadvayapravṛtti*).[2680]

However, although it introduces the concepts of *svârtha* and *parârtha* at the fourth category of "function", it does not pertain only or even primarily to that category in RGV. Rather, mention

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[2679] See above n. 2575.

[2680] RGV 2.1, Johnston 79, Takasaki 310; *yathākramaṃ svaparârthasaṃpādanaṃ karma,* RGVV following 2.1, Johnston 79, Takasaki 313; *tatra katamā svaparârthasaṃpat/ yā savāsanakleśajñeâvaraṇavijmokṣād anāvaraṇadharmakāyaprāptir iyam ucyate svârthasaṃpattiḥ/ yā tadūrdhvamā kāyadvayena saṃdarśanadeśanāvibhutvadvayapravṛttir iyam ucyate parârthasaṃpattir iti, Vyākhyāna* following 2.17, Johnston 82, Takasaki 319.

of these concepts occurs in several metadiscursive portions of the commentarial layer of the text (RGVV), which operate throughout the chapter as bridges between the exposition of the various individual members of the sixfold rubric. These bridge sections devote their attention to articulating the relations *between* the concepts the rubric encompasses. We have already seen passages of this nature in our examination of the structural relations among the earlier members of the sixfold rubric in RGV above.[2681] Here, before we wade into the precise nature of the categories of "for the Buddha's own sake" and "for the sake of others" in RGV, it is important that we first lay out a similar picture of the logical relations among the later members of the rubric, which is the context within which that opposition is to be interpreted. As we will see, in RGV the last three members of the rubric are treated in important ways as a single integral whole.

Thus, in the first important instance of these metastructural passages, introducing the last three members of the sixfold rubric just before 2.18, RGV introduces this opposition in a manner which also summarises the logical relations between the second to fourth members of the rubric as follows:

> "Thus, the twofold special knowledge, viz. the transcendent [special knowledge] that is free of discrimination and the [special knowledge] acquired subsequently are the cause (*hetu*) of the revolutionary transformation of the basis (*āśrayaparāvṛtti*), which is designated the 'result (*phala*) of liberation'.[2682] The 'function' (*karman*) of that [result] is declared to be realisation for the sake of the Buddha himself and others. What, then, is [meant] here [by] 'realisation for the sake of the Buddha himself and others'? The attainment of the *dharmakāya* without obstructions that comes of liberation from the twofold obstructions of passions and objects of knowledge, along with the latent tendencies that accompany them, is said to be 'realisation for the Buddha's own sake'. The subsequent manifestation (*pravṛtti*) by means of a twofold embodiment of a twofold

[2681] *yad uta dvividhaṃ lokôttaram avikalpaṃ tatprṣṭhalabdhaṃ ca jñānam āśrayaparāvṛtter hetu visaṃyogaphalasaṃjñitāyāḥ*, Johnston 82. This part of this passage was already cited above n. 2640.

[2682] *vimuktidharmakāyābhyāṃ svaparârtho nidarśitaḥ/ svaparârthâsraye tasmin yogo 'cintyâdibhir guṇaiḥ*, 2.30, Johnston 84, Takasaki 322-323. We will return to the interpretation of other contents of this verse below.

> mastery of visible display and teaching, for as long as the world endures and without any effort, is said to be 'realisation for the sake of others'."[2683]

We will return to the specifics of the doctrine of embodiment put forth here below. For the moment, the main point here is observe the way that this passage, rather than comprising a comment solely on the category of "function" alone, articulates the relations between the second, third, fourth and sixth members of the sixfold rubric, and between some of these and what is "for the Buddha's own sake" and "for the sake of others". The most important points to note at this stage of our analysis are (1) *dharmakāya* is particularly related to "for the Buddha's own sake"; (2) "for the sake of others" is apparently connected with the sixth member of the rubric, "manifestation"; (3) "for the sake of others" particularly relates to two bodies.

The relation among members of the rubric demonstrated here is not confined to the prose only of RGVV, however. In introducing the category of "concomitants" (*yoga*) at 2.30, the *śloka* returns to the question of the structural relations between members of the rubric, and once again invokes the idea of "for the sake of the Buddha himself and others" (*svaparârtha*):

> "[Function, *karman*] for his own sake and for the sake of others (*svaparârtha*) is indicated (*nidarśita*) by the [two[2684]] embodiments of liberation and *dharma* (*vimukti-/dharmakāya*); on this basis (*āśraya*) in [action] for his own sake and for the sake of others [is based] concomitance [accompaniment, *yoga*] by qualities such as inconceivability, etc."[2685]

There is already a difficulty here. Where, in the first metadiscursive passage, it seemed clear that "for the Buddha's own sake" pertained solely to the *dharmakāya,* and vice versa, here, both "for his own sake" and "for the sake of others" are related to both *vimuktikāya* and *dharmakāya*.

[2683] *tatkarma svaparârthasaṃpādam ity uktam/ tatra katamā svaparârthasaṃpat/ yā savāsanakleśajñeâvaraṇavimokṣād anāvaraṇadharmakāyaprāptir iyam ucyate svârthasaṃpattiḥ/ yā tadūrdhvamā lokād anābhogataḥ kāyadvayena saṃdarśanadeśanāvibhutvadvayapravṛttir iyam ucyate parârthasaṃpattir iti,* already cited in part above, n. 2680, also discussed at text to n 2663.

[2684] The noun here is in the dual.

[2685] *vimuktidharmakāyābhyāṃ svaparârtha nidarśitaḥ/ svaparârthāśraye tasmin yogo 'cintyādibhir guṇaih,* 2.30, Johnston 84, Takasaki 322-323.

Thus, we seem to be confronted with two kinds of relations we would not have anticipated from the earlier passage alone: between *dharmakāya* and "for the sake of others", and between *vimuktikāya* and "for the sake of" both the Buddha himself and others. We will return to this problem below.

A final metadiscursive passage does not directly mention the problematic of "for the Buddha's own sake" and "for the sake of others", but it implies it, and in other ways also adds to the evidence of these other sections that the last three members of the sixfold rubric are treated by the text as an integral unit.

> "Because of the concomitance (*yoga*) of its unique qualities (*āveṇikadharmayutatvād*[2686]), it should be understood that buddhahood (*tathāgatavam*) manifests (*pravartata* < *vṛt,* cf. *vṛtti*) itself in [all] the destinies of rebirth as the cause and support (*ādhānanimittam*) of the welfare and happiness of worldlings (*jagaddhitasukha*) by means of three immaculate bodies, viz. *svābhāvika-, sāṃbhogika-* and *nairmāṇika-;* and this is a manifestation (*vṛtti*) inseparable from its unconditioned qualities . . . "[2687]

The category of "for the sake of others" is clearly at work here in the notion that the manifestation of the Buddha by means of the three bodies is the support and cause for the welfare and happiness of sentient beings.

We can further verify that *sāṃbhogikakāya* and *nairmāṇikakāya* here refer back to the appearance and teaching by means of a twofold embodiment introduced in the "function" section by noting that they are said to operate "without interruption, without cease, *without*

[2686] Noting that *yuta = yukta* is essentially the same thing as *yoga,* and that this cognate certainly refers back to the category of *yoga* just expounded. The *āveṇikadharmas* are thus among the *guṇa* ("qualities") "concomitant" with or "attendant upon" (*yukta, yoga*) buddhahood.

[2687] RGVV preceding 2.38: [*yat punar etad ākāśavad*] *asaṃskṛtaguṇâvinirbhāgavṛttyâpi tathāgatatvam ābhavagater* [*acintyamahôpāyakaruṇājñānaparikarmaviśeṣeṇa*] *jagaddhitasukhâdhānanimittam amalais tribhiḥ svabhāvikasāṃbhogikanarimāṇikairḥ kāyair* [*anuparatam anucchinnam anābhogena*] *pravartata iti draṣṭavyam āveṇikadharmayutatvād iti.* I have omitted from my translation parts of this complicated discussion that do not relate directly to the points of analysis to hand, as indicated by the square brackets. Johnston 85, Takasaki 324.

effort" (*anuparatam anucchinnam anābhogena*).[2688] This way of putting things is echoes very precisely the earlier passage about the twofold embodiment "for the sake of others", which says that their operation goes on "as long as the world exists, without effort" (*lokād anābhogataḥ*). It is further echoed again in the specific treatment of *sāṃbhogikakāya,* where it is said to be characterised not only by the fact that it acts "ceaselessly and without effort" (*kṛtyâsaṃsana, nirābhogaṃ, anabhisamskṛti*), but also by the two aspects of "teaching and visible show" (*deśena, darśana*) – a clear echo of precisely the twofold function "for the sake of others" introduced in the "function" section – and this is called "uninterrupted work for the sake of sentient beings" (*sattvârtâsraṃsanatvam*).[2689]

Further, in expounding the *nairmāṇikakāya,* similarly, the text here says that the Buddha "toils to his utmost for the company of the ignorant" (*bālasārthâtīvâhana*);[2690] most generally, the content of these two sections is in keeping with the notion of "for the sake of others", as they describe the Buddha working for the salvation of sentient beings,[2691] in accordance with their capacities,[2692] out of his great compassion,[2693] etc.

[2688] This is part of the long sentence already cited above n. 2687, though I did not translate this portion there. The notion of "without effort" (*nirābhogaṃ*) is repeated again in the section treating the *sāṃbhogikakāya* in particular, where it is notably coupled again with the pairing of "teaching" and "visible manifestation" (*deśanā, darśanā*); 2.51, Johnston 87, Takasaki 328.

[2689] 2.49-51; Johnston 87, Takasaki 328. That *both* these categories are here assigned to *sāṃbhogikakāya* alone makes it clear that both *sāṃbhogikakāya* and *nairmāṇikakāya* fulfill both functions, rather than one function being particular to each. We will return to the implications of this fact below; basically, it is a part of the tendency of the text to treat them as both very similar, as when it calls them two kinds of *rūpakāya,* etc.

[2690] 2.60, Johnston 88, Takasaki 331. Takasaki explains, n. 151, that *sārtha* implies the metaphor of a caravan of journeying traders.

[2691] " . . . he ferries beings across to *nirvāṇa*", *sattvān pratārayati nirvṛttau,* 2.57, Johnston 88, Takasaki 330.

[2692] *sattvapratyayavaicitryād atadbhāvas tathā vibhoḥ,* 2.52cd, Johnston 87, Takasaki 329.

[2693] *mahākaruṇayā,* 2.53a, Johnston 87, Takasaki 329.

Perhaps most importantly for the larger substantive issues this interpretation ultimately needs to address, we recall that already at the metadiscursive introduction to the fourth category, "for the sake of others" was described as "the manifestation (*pravṛtti*) *subsequent* [to the attainment of the *dharmakāya* for the Buddha's own sake] by means of a twofold embodiment of a twofold mastery of visible display and teaching". Obviously, with the *dharmakāya* counted as a separate embodiment, this further twofold embodiment for the sake of others makes three, and it seems most logical to regard this triad as the same triad later presented under the guise of *trikāya* in the "manifestation" section. Given that this same twofold embodiment is immediately said at the introduction to the "function" section to endure as long as the world, however, we can infer that "subsequent" here surely means that this twofold embodiment follows or depends upon the *dharmakāya* logically or ontologically rather than chronologically. It seems clear that the relation described here is an analogue to the relation that the text elsewhere (like MSA) speaks of when it says that the *svābhāvikakāya* is the "basis" (*āśraya*) of the other two bodies (e.g. at 2.1, as we saw above).

It is significant, then, that this same relation among the three bodies, of dependents or consequents to ground, is recapitulated at the end of the text's treatment of embodiments in the section on the category of "manifestation" (*vṛtti*). There, the text says that "the arising of the latter [two, i.e. *sāṃbhogikakāya* and *nairmāṇikakāya*] on [in] the first [viz. *svābhāvikakāya*] is similar to [the way] material things [sit] in space."[2694] This latter trope of space as the fundamental cause of things, is clearly a figure for the role of buddhahood as the underlying and pervasive cause and ground of all its phenomenal manifestations throughout all three

[2694] *prathamo dharmakāyo 'tra rūpakāyau tu paścimau/ vyomni rūpagatasyêva prathame 'ntyasya vartanam,* 2.61, Johnston 88, Takasaki 331.

sections, from "function" (*karman*) to *vṛtti*.[2695] This statement of the posterior or dependent relation of the latter two bodies to *svābhāvikakāya* as to a ground echoes the way the three bodies are ushered in at the introduction to the "function" section, and the way these two mentions of the same notion encloses the last three sections like a pair of book-ends is additional reason, beside the common thread of the problematic of "for the sake of the Buddha himself or others", to regard the last three members of the sixfold rubric as a single integral unit.

Thus, to summarise the discussion so far, it seems clear that there is ample indication in the text that (1) the last three members of the sixfold rubric, viz. function, concomitants and manifestation, are to be regarded as an integral unit; (2) the theme of what is "for the Buddha's own sake" or "for the sake of others" runs throughout this section; (3) this same theme is important to the exposition and meaning of notions of embodiment throughout; (4) if *dharmakāya* functions for the sake of the Buddha himself, the twofold embodiment that functions for the sake of others is clearly identified with *sāṃbhogikakāya* and *nairmāṇikakāya*; (5) as in MSA, *dharmakāya*[2696] is the basis (*āśraya*) for the other two embodiments. These interim conclusions allow us to begin making connections back to findings of earlier parts of our

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[2695] See esp. 2.27-28, "Just as space, being itself without a cause, is the cause of perceiving, hearing etc. . . . in the same way, [the *dharmakāya*] . . . is the cause for the coming into being of undefiled qualities in the objects of the sense-organs for the enlightened", *yathânimittam ākāśaṃ nimittaṃ rūpadarśane/ śabda . . . . indriyârtheṣu dhīrāṇām anāsravaguṇôdaye/ hetuḥ kāya*[*dvayaṃ*] *tadvad anāvaraṇayogataḥ,* Johnston 83-84, Takasaki 321-322 (I am passing over for the moment here the problem of what exactly is meant by *kāyadvaya,* and also that of how this sensory experience relates to *trikāya*.) For the same comparison of the *dharmakāya* to space and the other bodies to objects in space, see also 2.40-41, *vicitrabhāvo na ca tat svabhāvavān . . . . bimbaṃ tad apy atra daāvaruddham ākāśadhātāv iva rūpadhātuḥ,* Johnston 86, Takasaki 325-326. See also, on the analogy between the Buddha and space only (without these same implications necessarily being drawn), 2.20cd *tathāgatavyoma nimittavarjitam,* 2.20, Johnston 83, Takasaki 320; RGVV introducing 2.27, *yad uktam ākāśalakṣaṇo buddha iti . . .* Johnston 84, Takasaki 322;.

[2696] Or *svābhāvikakāya*; we will come to the relation between these two concepts shortly.

discussion, and using them to clarify further the interpretation of *vimuktikāya* and *dharmakāya* and their relation to the *trikāya.*

First, we can return here to the analysis of the opposition between "for the sake of the Buddha" and "for the sake of others" in RGV, and its relation to the same concepts in MSA. We saw above that despite textual problems in MSA, the simplest reading of the majority of witnesses to the text suggests that it intends us to understand *sāṃbhogikakāya* as "for the Buddha's own sake". However, as we have just seen, here in RGV, *sāṃbhogikakāya* clearly joins *nairmāṇikakāya* as "for the sake of others".

We already noted above, in discussing the divergent versions of MSA and their implications, that to regard both *sāṃbhogikakāya* and *nairmāṇikakāya* as "for the sake of others" is to suggest that no palpable embodiment of the Buddha is authentically his embodiment, and therefore to tend in the direction of the understanding that such palpable embodiments are, rather, docetistic shows. Indeed, this understanding of even the *sāṃbhogikakāya* is reflected in its treatment at RGV 2.49-52: it "manifests" (*avabhāsa*) the Dharma (as the object of "enjoyment", *saṃbhoga*);[2697] one of its functions is "visible show" (*darśana*); it "appears in forms without any reality" (*atatsvabhāvavyākhyāna*); and emphasis is laid on the multitude of "various forms" (*vicitratā, vaicitrya*) in which it appears.[2698] This is also in keeping, in my opinion, with the fact that the text strikingly speaks of *sāṃbhogikakāya* and *nairmāṇikakāya* as [two] *rūpakāya* (in the

[2697] Takasaki adds the word "itself" here: "It manifests itself the doctrine"; though without indicating it is a translator's addition. This strikes me as unjustified and most likely directly against the intentions of the text. It interprets the *sāṃbhogikakāya* as if it is "for the Buddha's own sake".

[2698] 2.49-52, Johnston 87, Takasaki 326.

dual), thus treating them both alike as members of the same category of embodiments whose most salient feature is visible appearance.[2699]

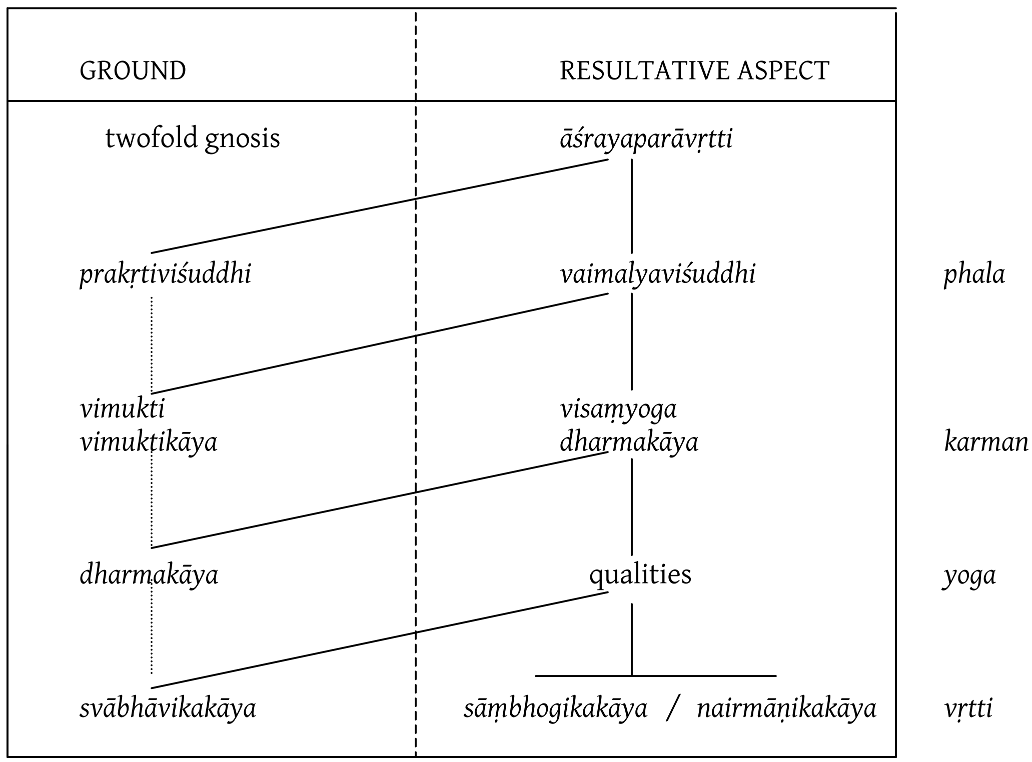
On the basis of these observations and other facts that we will observe below, it is possible to suggest that RGV actually represents a further step[2700] over MSA in an ongoing process of the docetisation of Buddha-body doctrine. We can trace this process beyond MSA to SdhN, which in some respects is less docetistic again. By this I mean that docetism admits of degrees, especially where there are multiple embodiments to pick from, and that it is therefore possible for docetisation to continue over time, rather than be accomplished in one fell swoop.[2701]

On the basis of the analysis of the claim that the last three members of the sixfold rubric here are to be understood as comprising an integral unit, it is now possible to extend the analysis I began above of the logical structure that governs this chapter. This will provide us with a framework in which we can orient ourselves in trying to interpret the opposition between *vimuktikāya* and *dharmakāya,* from which we set out, and its relation to *trikāya.*

[2699] *rūpakāyau tu paścimau,* 2.61, Johnston 88, Takasaki 331. Indeed, this fact in turn is unexpected confirmation of my suggestion that in its original contexts, the notion of *rūpakāya* may have been elaborated with something of an emphasis on visible "show", and thus bear a connection to docetism at its roots. See p. 1004.

[2700] Meaning only that the process has been taken further here, and not implying any value judgement.

[2701] In the Conclusion to this section of this dissertation, I will suggest that *trikāya* theory in general, but especially the version of it we observe here in RGV, represents a development of docetism to a rather extreme degree, and thus continues a process we have seen elsewhere in this dissertation already began centuries earlier with the *Lokânuvartanā-sūtra,* and continued through the extension of docetism to the Buddha's *parinirvāṇa* that accompanied the advent of the idea of his true immortality.



Along the same lines of the logic I identified as at work in the earlier categories of the sixfold rubric, the category of *dharmakāya* as a whole, considered as the resultative aspect of "function", is itself the ground for the further elaboration of "concomitants" (which are understood as qualities, *guṇa*, etc.). We saw above[2702] that the introduction to the *yoga* section says that *vimuktikāya* and *dharmakāya* together are the "basis" (*āśraya*) for accompaniment by qualities. We also saw[2703] that qualities in their turn are regarded as the cause for manifestation (*vṛtti*) of the *trikāya* for "the welfare and happiness of beings". In this final category of "manifestation", then, in keeping with the logic that has obtained throughout, the text still turns around and says, "And yet, considered in and of itself, buddhahood remains untrammelled and unchanged by these apparent developments." The new layer of understanding that is added to the exposition of the fundamental ground in this perspective is represented by the notion of

[2702] Passage cited n. 2685.

[2703] Passage cited n. 2687.

svābhāvikakāya, which brings us full circle, back to the *svabhāva* from which the rubric set out in the first place.

Hopefully, the identification of this logic allows us to resolve one puzzle left lingering above: the ambiguity over whether the *dharmakāya* is "for the sake of the Buddha himself" or for the sake of both the Buddha and others.[2704] Viewed in the perspective of the sixth category in the rubric, *vṛtti,* whose terms are being anticipated at the introduction to *karman, dharmakāya* is "for the Buddha's own sake" and the other two bodies are "for the sake of others". However, *karman* itself, in its entirety, expounds only the *grounds* of *trikāya,* and in its terms, both *dharmakāya* and *vimuktikāya* are *the basis of* (as the text says) of qualities. Those qualities are in turn the basis of *trikāya,* which is for the sake *of both the Buddha himself* (*svābhāvikakāya*) and others.

In sum, then, these considerations allow us to see that despite their frequent equivalence, *dharmakāya* and *svābhāvikakāya* do not mean precisely the same thing. *Dharmakāya* is proper to the "function" of a resultative aspect of the purification of Thusness/buddhahood, and in that context, is itself resultative, in opposition to a primordial purity which is conceived of as the *vimuktikāya.* However, it is also conceived of as inalienably identical to the ultimate ground itself, and in that capacity, it grounds a further "manifestation" (via an intermediary category of "concomitant qualities") of buddhahood in a threefold embodiment for the sake of itself and others. *Svābhāvikakāya* is proper to this posterior stage of "manifestation", and is thus buddhahood "manifested" for itself. The catch, however, as at all the stages of this dialectic, is that this is an oxymoronic category, because the way buddhahood is supposedly "manifested" for itself is *not manifest*, but remains identical to buddhahood as it always ever was, as only befits its self-adequation and inalienable identity to itself. In this respect, *svābhāvikakāya* is

[2704] This puzzle was raised by the combination of the commentarial introductions to the *karman* section at 2.18 and the *yoga* section at 2.30.

precisely identical to *dharmakāya,* so that properly speaking, the difference between the two is only one of expository standpoint, and nothing substantive.

I hope that the analysis so far has clarified the logical structural relations among the twofold notion of embodiments (*vimuktikāya-dharmakāya*) proposed in RGV under the category of "function", and the classic *trikāya* model under the category of "manifestation". It should be possible to give further concrete content to these categories, however, and therefore further improve our sense of what the text means, by bringing in other passages pointed out by Takasaki within RGV itself, and also with reference to MSA and the *Saṃdhinirmocana* (SdhN). In what follows, therefore, we will first look at the opposed categories of *vimuktikāya* and *dharmakāya* in SdhN, and an implicit opposition between similar concepts in MSA.

5.3.6.4 *Vimuktikāya* vs. *dharmakāya* as a connection to SdhN 10 and MSA

We have already seen in Chapter 5.2.9 that SdhN is the *locus classicus* for the opposition between *vimuktikāya* and *dharmakāya.* As I also mentioned above, SdhN is older than either MSA or RGV, so that we would expect that any borrowing of this opposition should have been from SdhN to the other texts. This means that it is certainly reasonable to look at the understanding of this opposition at SdhN 10 for our present purposes, to see if it sheds any light on the way the opposition is used in RGV 2. I believe that it does help us interpret the present passage to some degree, but that there are also clear distinctions between the way the terms are used in SdhN and RGV.

In SdhN, as we have already seen, (the *āśrayaparāvṛtti* of) Śrāvakas and Pratyekabuddhas are said to be equal to the Buddhas with respect to the *vimuktikāya,* but (that of) the Buddha is said to be unique and superior in respect of the *dharmakāya.* In attempting to determine further

what exactly might be meant by this distinction, we are forced to fall back on inferences from context.

Most generally, we can note that what distinguishes the Buddhas from the Śrāvakas and Pratyekabuddhas is arguably their salvific work for other beings, that is, what they do "for the sake of others". Thus, it may make good sense to understand here that *vimuktikāya* refers to a shared innate enlightenment, while *dharmakāya* refers in some sense to the unique activity of the Buddhas in teaching and saving sentient beings.

To support the notion that this might be the case, we can further note that in SdhN 10, the declaration that the Tathāgatas are superior in terms of their *dharmakāya* leads immediately into a twofold discussion of their salvific work for sentient beings.[2705] We can see as aspects of this salvific work as expounded in the text both (i) the *nirmāṇakāya* (*sprul pa'i sku*) and (ii) the Buddha's teaching (*gsung brjod pa*).

First, the *nirmāṇakāya* is first presented in the terms (by now standardised) of the Buddha's display (*ston pa, deśanā*) of the stations (*rim pa*) of his stereotyped career, i.e. birth, renunciation, *parinirvāṇa* etc. (This is entirely in keeping with the way the *nairmāṇikakāya* is presented in both RGV 2 and the more abbreviated treatment of MSA 9.64.) This *nirmāṇakāya* is further described as "empowered" (*byin gyis brlabs pa, adhiṣṭhita*) by the manifold qualities of the Buddha (*yon tan bkod pa'i rgyan, *guṇavyūhâlaṃkāra*), in a manner that is reminiscent of statements in the RGV 2 that the triple embodiment somehow spring from the qualities (*guṇa,* which in RGV are considered under the fifth member of the sixfold rubric, *yoga* or "concomitants"). Later in SdhN 10, we are informed further that "innumerable magical

[2705] SdhN 10.3 ff, Lamotte 150 ff, 257 ff, Powers 277 ff.

emanation forms arise for sentient beings . . . on/in the *dharmakāya* of the Tathāgata",[2706] which suggests (with tantalising brevity) that the *dharmakāya* may be a kind of ground for the *nirmāṇakāya.*

In SdhN 10, this notion of "empowerment" is further immediately picked up again in a statement that the Tathāgatas teach by means of the "empowerment body" (*byin gyi rlabs kyi skus, *adhiṣṭhānakāyena*). This certainly means that the *nirmāṇakāya* is a means or necessary condition for the teaching of the Dharma.

In fact, this preparation leads immediately into the long conspectus of the teaching, the genres that comprise it, etc. that preoccupies much of the rest of SdhN 10. We might thus regard the chapter as expounding the *dharmakāya* in the sense of the "corpus of/embodiment in Dharma *qua* teachings" (*deśanādharmakāya*). It therefore providings us with a model of *dharmakāya* in overt articulation against a *vimuktikāya.* In the terms of this model, we can make sense of the placement of *dharmakāya* after *vimuktikāya*, and its implicit relation to "for the sake of others", in the present RGV 2 context.

Further confirmation that this analysis is correct for SdhN is found at SdhN 10.8. Here, the Buddha finishes his complex exposition of the categories of the Dharma, means of teaching and analysing it, etc. Mañjuśrī then asks him to give a *dhāraṇī* (*gzungs kyi don,* here something like an epitome) summarising the point of the whole of the Dharma.[2707] The epitome says: (1) In reality, all *dharmas,* defiled and purified, are in fact free of motion (*gyo ba med pa, *āniñjya*),

[2706] *de bzhin shegs pa'i chos kyi sku . . . . la sems can rnams la . . . . sprul pa'i gzugs brynan dpag tu med pa dag 'byung,* Lamotte 163, 269, Powers 305.

[2707] I.e. Sūtra, Vinaya, and Mātṛkā (= Abhidharma), the three *piṭakas*: *mdo sde dang/ 'gul ba dang/ ma mo de dag gi gzungs kyi don ma lus pa.*

devoid of person (*gang zag med pa, *niḥpudgala*), and therefore without any kind of activity whatsoever (*rnam pa thams cad du byed pa med pa, *sarvathā kriyārahita*).[2708] (2) Foolish ordinary beings (*byis pa so so'i skye bo, *bālapṛṭhagjana*), however, have views that make them tend to construct and fixate upon hypostasised essences of persons and things (*pudgala, dharma*) in the "body [afflicted by] badness" (*gnas ngan lan gyi lus, *dauṣṭhulyakāya*);[2709] they thus grasp at "I", "mine" etc. (3) This is contrasted with the situation of the awakened:

> "Those who understand [things] exactly as they are (**yathābhūtam pra/jñā*) abandon completely the 'body of badness' (**dauṣṭhulyakāya*), and attain a body (*lus, *kāya*) that is not a basis (*gnas, *āśraya*) for all the defilements (**sarvakleśâśraya*), but is completely pure (**suviśuddha*), free of conceptual proliferation (**niḥprapañca*), unconditioned (**asaṃskṛta*), and free from all purposive (effortful, intentional) action (**anabhisaṃskāra*)."[2710]

This passage is clearly about *āśrayaparāvṛtti,* although it does not mention the concept by name, and one could almost never discern the fact from either of the extant Western-language translations.[2711] It thus picks up the thread upon which the chapter opened, about the

[2708] Lamotte 160, 266, Powers 297. In other words, this is a doctrine of original purity. The doctrine of original purity is expressed somewhat circuitously: it is not that defiled *dharmas,* being defiled at an earlier time, later become pure, nor that pure *dharmas,* while pure later, were ever previously defiled; *kun nas nyon mongs pa'i chos rnams kyang sngon kun nas nyon mongs pa can du gyur la phyis rnam par byang bar 'gyur ba ma yin/ rnam par byang ba'i chos rnams kyang phyis rnam par byang ba la ngon kun nas nyon mongs pa can du gyur pa ma yin . . .*

[2709] *de la byis pa so so'i skye bo rnams gnas ngan len gyi lus la chos dang gang zag gi ngo bo nyid du mngon par zhen pa'i bag la nyal ba'i lta ba la brten nas . . .* Lamotte 160. I take this "in" (Tib. *la*) to mean not that *pṛthagjana* fall into these mistaken views *while they are in* such a body, but that they construct these hypostasised putative entities *upon* that body. This is borne out by Xuanzang's Ch.: 凡夫異生於麁重身執著諸法補特伽羅自性 T676.710b14-15.

[2710] *gang la la de ltar yang dag pa ji lta ba bzhin du rab tu shes pa de ni gnas ngan len gyi lus rab tu spong zhing/ nyon mongs pa thams cad kyi gnas ma yin pa/ shin tu rnam par dag pa / spros pa med pa / 'dus ma byas pa / mngon par 'du bya ba med pa'i lus 'thob par 'gyur te,* Lamotte 160, 266, Powers 299.

[2711] The translations are a catalogue of misunderstanding and obfuscation here. Lamotte does not translate the key "which is not a basis for" of *nyon mongs pa thams cad kyi gnas ma yin pa,* but rather translates simply "[un corps] exempt de toute passion". Powers, on the other hand, fails to see that this clause is another modifier for *lus,* and translates it as part of the previous sentence. In both translations the connection between the concept of *dauṣṭhulya* and *āśrayaparāvṛtti* would be almost impossible to discern, even for readers who knew of the connection in other contexts, because they translate **dauṣṭhulyakāya* "corps d'impuissance" and (even more impenetrably) "collection of errant tendencies" respectively.

āśrayaparāvṛtti of the Tathāgatas. We recall from Ch 5.2 that in the earliest layers of YBh, *āśrayaparāvṛtti* was already conceived in terms of the elimination of "badness" (**dauṣṭhulya*). We also see here that the revolutionary transformation at issue results in "purity" (**suviśuddha*), which of course is entirely in keeping with another major model of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* as purification (of Thusness, the *dharmadhātu* etc.). In effect, it seems that here we have a synthesis between these two conceptions. Further, the text clearly says that in the state resultant upon transformation, the body is no longer a "basis" (**āśraya*) for the *kleśas.* Given that these associations make it so clear that the concept of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* is at play here, it is of particular interest that instead of using the term *āśraya,* the text speaks directly of the abandonment of one "body" (*lus, kāya*) and the acquisition of another.[2712]

For our most immediate purposes here, in trying to discern the relevance of the SdhN model for the *vimuktikāya-dharmakāya* opposition in RGV, the point of all this is that the text clearly understands itself to have implicitly been talking all along about the superiority of the Tathāgata's *āśrayaparāvṛtti.* SdhN 10 began by posing the problematic of *āśrayaparāvṛtti,* and here it returns to it, by way of closing the topic. Further, given that this version of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* is presented as an epitome of all the doctrine, and that the chapter has devoted so much of its energies in the interim to outlining the categories of the doctrine and its investigation, it seems clear that the implication is that understanding the doctrine in the manner prescribed constitutes "knowing things exactly as they are", and so precipitates the revolutionary corporeal transformation presented. Given that the text began by saying, further, that what distinguishes the *āśrayaparāvṛtti* of the Tathāgatas from the inferior *āśrayaparāvṛtti* of the Śrāvakas and Pratyekabuddhas is the unique nature of the Buddha's *dharmakāya,* it seems reasonably to conclude that this category refers to the same teaching in

[2712] If we still needed further confirmation that *āśrayaparāvṛtti* is indeed a corporeal notion in the first instance, this passage would provide it.

some respect. I suggest that it is primarily in their *teaching* of this Dharma that the Buddhas are conceived of as distinct from and superior to the Śrāvakas and Pratyekabuddhas, and that this is what is meant that they have a different *āśrayaparāvṛtti*. It is, if we like, an *āśrayaparāvṛtti* with trickle-down, i.e. one that is productive of spiritual goods not just for the person liberated himself but also for (all) other sentient beings.

In light of this apparent logic at work in SdhN, it seems significant that in the passage cited immediately above, the new "body" (*lus*, *kāya*) acquired as a result of this revolutionary transformation echoes in several respects the descriptions of realised buddhahood we have already encountered at different points above in our analysis of RGV 2. It entails a perfect gnosis (**yathābhūtam pra/jñā;* cf. the twofold gnosis as cause of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* in the "cause/result" section of RGV); it is free of defilements; it is completely pure (**suviśuddha*); it is free of conceptual proliferation (**niḥprapañca,* cf. repeated mentions of *nirvikalpa* in RGV); it is unconditioned (**asaṃskṛta*); and it is free from purposive action (or effort, **anabhisaṃskāra*).

The text goes on immediately to discuss aspects of the Tathāgata's manifestation in the world, and the related problem of what is real therein and what is mere docetistic show. Thus, the Tathāgatas do not really have any mental activity, and the apparent mental activity seen in them is "like a magical emanation" (*sprul pa lta bu*).[2713] Soon thereafter, the text then reverts again to the question of the nature of the *nirmāṇakāya,* and we are given the additional detail, already mentioned above, that "innumerable magical emanation forms arise for sentient beings . . . on/in the *dharmakāya* of the Tathāgata".[2714] Thus, it appears possible that in this section, at least, the text is underlain by a more rudimentary form of the same logic that we

[2713] 10.9, Lamotte 161, 267, Powers 299-301.

[2714] See n. 2706.

have already see above, whereon realisation of the *dharmakāya* is a precondition and ground for the manifestation of *nirmāṇakāya* for sentient beings.

When the text discusses the problem of what is real and what is docetistic show in these appearances, however, it strikes a very determinedly equivocal stance, reminiscent of Prajñāpāramitā dialectics. The aforementioned "emanation minds" (*sprul pa'i sems,* **nirmāṇacitta*) neither exist nor do not exist (*sems yod pa 'ang ma yin/ med pa 'ang ma yin*).[2715] The text also treats this problem with regard to the most salvifically important features of the stereotyped Buddha's career, namely the attainment of enlightenment, the turning of the wheel of the Dharma, and the *parinirvāṇa.* Further, it is not willing to state a bald docetism with regard to them. It states rather that these events are "characterised by non-duality", and in each case in turn, that the Buddhas "neither X nor do not X". "This is because of the complete purification of the *dharmakāya,* and the complete manifestation of the *nirmāṇakāya*."[2716] In other words, the text will not budge on the reality of the *nirmāṇakāya* also. This seems a clearly less directly docetistic stance than the RGV and even MSA, and it is for this reason that I contend that we see, through the course of these three texts, a progressive docetisation of body doctrine.

In sum, it seems to me that consideration of the SdhN usage of the opposition between *vimuktikāya* and *dharmakāya* shows us too many parallels with the treatment of the same categories in RGV for the common occurrence of the two terms in both texts to be mere chance.

[2715] 10.9, Lamotte 162, 267, Powers 301.

[2716] 10.10: *gnyis su med pa'i mtshan nyid yin te/ mngon par rdzogs par byang chub pa'ang ma yin/ mngon par rdzogs par byang ma chub pa'ang ma yin/ chos kyi 'khor lo bskor ba'ang ma yin/ chos kyi 'khor lo mi bskor ba'ang ma yin/ yongs su mya ngan las 'das pa chen po 'ang ma yin/ yongs su mya ngan las 'das pa chen po med pa 'ang ma yin te/ chos kyi sku shin tu rnam par dag pa nyid kyi phyir dang/ sprul pa'i sku kun tu ston pa nyid kyi phyir ro,* Lamotte 162-163, 268, Powers 303.

In both contexts, *āśrayaparāvṛtti* is a basic category underpinning the discussion. In both, realisation and *āśrayaparāvṛtti* are conceived of in terms of a process of purification of the "absolute" of defilements. In both contexts, realisation leads to the attainment of a *dharmakāya* that is opposed in some regard to a *vimuktikāya* (though, as I will argue immediately below, the precise sense of the latter term in particular may differ). In both, it seems, the attainment of the *dharmakāya* is a precondition or ground for the elaboration of *nairmāṇikakāya,* and the display of *nairmāṇikakāya* is closely coupled with the preaching of the Dharma as an aspect or facet of the Buddha's salvific activity.

However, we must of course not conclude for these reasons that we are dealing with exactly the same model in both cases. I have already mentioned above that by comparison to RGV, SdhN strikes a deliberately equivocal stance on the question of the reality of *nairmāṇikakāya.* RGV, by contrast, contains an embodiment doctrine that is much more overtly docetised. In addition to this point we should also note the following differences. First, the understanding of *vimuktikāya* itself may differ in significant respects. There is no indication in RGV that commonality with Śrāvakas and Pratyekabuddhas is even a pertinent definitional criterion for the *vimuktikāya.*[2717] There is also, contrariwise, no indication in SdhN of RGV's notion of *vimuktikāya* as a primordial or aboriginal purity. Second, of course, SdhN does not yet contain an overt doctrine of a threefold embodiment; it speaks of three types of body, viz. the *vimuktikāya,* the *dharmakāya,* and the *nairmāṇikakāya*, but the it would be fallacious to speak of the first of these as an embodiment *of the Buddha* in the same sense as the other two, since it is shared in common with Śrāvakas and Pratyekabuddhas.

[2717] There is an inkling of this idea in MSA, as we will see immediately below.

The most likely scenario, to my mind, that allows us to account for these similarities and differences is the following. RGV borrowed the twofold division of *vimuktikāya* and *dharmakāya* from SdhN. The significant underlying similarities between the general doctrinal environments of the two texts ensured that this borrowing did not, on the whole, entail any excessive wrench or unnaturalness. In so doing, however, RGV took this twofold model into a context where the distinction between Buddhas and Śrāvakas or Pratyekabuddhas was hardly at issue. Since the *vimuktikāya* thus no longer did the work it originally did, it was freed up to take on a different role, and the author of RGVV found a clever way of spinning the semantics of *vimukti* to make it refer to a primordial freedom of Thusness/buddhahood from adventitious taints. On the other hand, RGV took a twofold model of embodiment, one member of which was not exclusive to the Buddha, into a context where it was to be combined with a fully fledged *trikāya* model of the Buddha's special embodiments. This meant that *dharmakāya,* too, was no longer required to do its former work of exclusively accounting for the unique nature of the Buddha's embodiment, since *trikāya* does this much more elaborately. *Dharmakāya* was also freed to take on a new role.

We are now ready to consider the light that might be shed on the use of this opposition in RGV by its probable SdhN origin. I believe we reap the fruit of this comparison primarily in fleshing out the actual content of the *dharmakāya.* That is to say, it seems likely that in the RGV context, the concept of *dharmakāya* retained from SdhN the following features: (1) it is attained as a result of *āśrayaparāvṛtti*; (2) it is a ground for the subsequent elaboration of docetistic embodiments to teach sentient beings; (3) most significantly, the main meaning of *dharma-* as it qualifies this embodiment is that it is an embodiment *for the purposes of teaching.* Finally, it seems possible that we can also trace a line of affiliation from SdhN's effective twofold model of the Buddha's embodiment, comprising *dharmakāya* and *nairmāṇikakāya* only, to RGV's basically

bipartite division of the *trikāya* model into *dharmakāya* as "basis" and a "twofold *rūpakāya*", i.e. *sāṃbhogikakāya* and *nairmāṇikakāya.* On this schema, as we have already noted above, these latter two modes of embodiment appear on the whole remarkably similar: both function to ends of visible display and teaching; both are interpreted docetistically; both are exclusively "for the sake of others". In this, then, we may be seeing a reflex of a basically twofold model evidenced in SdhN, and this might also mean historically that the ideas we see in SdhN 10 are on the very cusp of the earliest forms of *trikāya* theory in all but name.[2718]

Having thus considered the relevance of the opposition between *vimuktikāya* and *dharmakāya* in SdhN to our analysis of RGV, we can dispense much more quickly with hints of a similar opposition in MSA.

In MSABh to the punning exposition of different kinds of *vṛtti* at MSA 9.14, the opposition between *vimuktikāya* and *dharmakāya* is echoed in a (possible) connection to (*parā-)vṛtti*:

> "[The *āśrayaparāvṛtti* of the Buddhas" is an equal *vṛtti* ("manifestation, transformation") because it is shared in common with the Śrāvakas and Pratyekabuddhas in virtue of the equality of liberation (*vimukti*). It is a special, distinct *vṛtti* because the Buddha qualities, viz. the powers, the confidences etc., are not common."[2719]

The primary differences between this version of the idea and that found in the SdhN 10 context are (1) that *vimukti* and the *āveṇikadharmas* (the eighteen unique Buddha qualities, i.e. the ten powers, four confidences etc.) are not spoken of in terms of *kāya*; (2) whereas in MSA reference

[2718] One hint of how close we may be here is the elaboration of a twofold opposition between two kinds of "domain" (or mental object) of the Tathāgatas, (*spyod yul, *gocara; yul, *viṣaya*). The first of these, in particular, is said to be "the completely pure Buddha-fields, arrayed with limitless, inconceivably qualities common to all Tathāgatas", *de bzhin gshegs pa'i spyod yul ni de bzhin gshegs pa thams cad thun mong pa/ yon tan bsam gyis mi khyab pa dang/ tshad med pa'i rgyan bkod pa'i sangs rgyas kyi zhing yongs su dag pa,* Lamotte 162, Powers 301. This is clearly reminiscent of the domain of the *sāṃghobikakāya*. The second, however, comprises a somewhat confusing congeries: the *sattvadhātu,* the *lokadhātu,* the *dharmadhātu,* the *vinayadhātu* and the *vinayôpāyadhātu.*

[2719] *vimuktisāmānyena śrāvakapratyekabuddhasamā vṛttiḥ/ balavaiśārdhyādibhiḥ buddhadharmair asamatvād viśiṣṭā vṛtti;* Lévi I, 36, Thurman et al., 79.

is made to the *āveṇikadharmas,* in SdhN, *dharmakāya* seems primarily to be understood in terms of the teaching.[2720] Recalling, however, that SdhN speaks of this difference between the two kinds of *kāya* specifically in terms of the Buddhas' *āśrayaparāvṛtti* being superior, and that at MSA the topic is also various kinds of *vṛtti*. It seems that the correspondence between the two passages is close enough that it seems very likely MSA is thinking of SdhN here.

While this connection between MSA and the *vimuktikāya-dharmakāya* opposition of SdhN is quite slight, it may be enough to show that the author of MSABh at least had the analysis of the Buddha's embodiments in SdhN in the back of his mind. Given that MSA in turn is clearly the primary source for the notion of *trikāya* in RGV, and that RGV much more explicitly turns to SdhN and tries to find a way to synthesise ideas from SdhN with the MSA model, this might lead us to suspect that in so doing, RGV was partly following the lead of MSA itself.

[2720] There are some reference to "qualities" in SdhN 10, however. See the passing mention of *yon tan bsam gyis mi khyab pa, *acinytaguṇa* in the passage just noted at n. 2718; the *nirmāṇakāya* are empowered by "all the types of adornment displaying the qualities of the Tathāgatas" *'byung ba'i de bzhin gshegs pa'i yon tan bkod pa'i rgyan gyi rnam pa thams cad kyis byin gyis brlabs pa'i mtshan nyid*, Lamotte 149-150, Powers 277; "Since the Dharmakāya is superior, [Tathāgatas] are also superior in terms of the immeasurable good qualities of arisen Tathāgatas", *chos kyi skus khyad par du 'phags na yon tan gyis khyad par dpag tu med pas kyang khyad par 'phags pa yin*, Lamotte 149, Powers 275.

Loose connections between qualities and the problematic of embodiment broadly can also be observed in the section (part of the very long 10.7 in Lamotte's numbering, which is on *mātṛkā,* i.e. the *abhidharma-piṭaka*) on the five "characteristics of omniscience/the Omniscient [one(s)]" *thams cad mkhyen pa'i mtshan nyid, *sarvajñālakṣaṇa,* where old ideas in the discourse of the Buddha's embodiments resurface: the first three of these five characteristics are (1) the possession of the thirty-two marks; (2) the ten powers; (3) the four confidences; thus, a combination of perfection in the physical body and (an abbreviated version of) the eighteen *āveṇikadharmas* of the Buddha; Lamotte 157, 264, Powers 291. We recall that omniscience itself is treated as an embodiment in a number of contexts; that the eighteen *āveṇikadharmas* is one important definition of the *dharmakāya* in the Sarvâstivāda Abhidharma; etc. However, the connection to *dharma* here is very loose, consisting mainly in the fact that this doctrine is advanced as one of the important "matrices" or mnemonic rubrics in whose terms is summarised the portion of the doctrine falling in the *abhidharma-piṭaka.* By contrast, I am suggesting that the doctrine *as a whole* is epitomised in this fashion as a way of surveying what is superior about the *dharmakāya* of the Buddhas. Rather than this loose connection to the overarching *dharmakāya,* it is the close association between the *āveṇikadharmas* and physical embodiment as represented by the perfection of the body of marks that bespeaks more clearly here the corporeal interpretation of the former.

In this section, I have argued that an analysis of the apparent similarities and differences between the use of the *vimuktikāya-dharmakāya* opposition in SdhN 10 and RGV 2 show that it is plausible that RGV borrowed the opposition from SdhN. Further, with due allowances for the genuine differences between the texts, we can use this fact to illuminate the likely content of the concept of *dharmakāya* in particular as it enters into the analysis of RGV. We now turn to two more conceptual parallels to this twofold model, this time found within RGV itself. I will argue that these parallels further corroborate these hints about the content of *dharmakāya* in particular, and throw better light on its relation to *vimuktikāya.*

5.3.6.5 A parallel twofold structure at RGV 1.149-150

In his "Introduction" and notes to his translation of RGV, Takasaki Jikidō refers us to several other passages in the work that cast some light on the ideas of *vimukti-* and *dharmakāya* operative here.[2721] One long passage contains two parallels that are especially revealing for the interpretation of the present passage from Chapter 2. Between 1.145 and 1.152 (i.e. at the end of Ch. 1), the text has a long passage comprising a complex, and in places somewhat artificial, application of the nine similes of the *Tathāgatagarbha-sūtra* to various guises of the absolute.[2722] Six out of nine of these applications are clearly related to various ideas about the Buddha's embodiments, and they fall in two groups, comprising the first three and the last three similes respectively. We turn first to the latter of these groups.

[2721] See esp. *Study* 28-31; 320 n. 56. Takasaki also refers us to the opposition between *prakṛtiviśuddhi* and *vaimalyaviśuddhi.* See RGVV following 2.7, which Takasaki relates to (3) effect, result (*phala*) in the sixfold rubric: *viśuddhi,* "purity", which is said to be the essence (*svabhāva*) of *āśrayaparāvṛtti*, is said to be of two kinds, innate (*prakṛtiviśuddhi*), and produced by the expurgation of taints (*vaimalyaviśuddhi*).

[2722] See also Makransky, *Buddhahood Embodied* 95-96, for discussion of these passages in relation to Makransky's broader reading of the *trikāya* schema as a working out of the logic of *apratiṣṭhitanirvāṇa*.

The details of the way the *Tathāgatagarbha-sūtra* similes are applied to the doctrines unfolded here[2723] need not detain us, but it is important for us to note simply that the three similes that relate to the *trikāya* are treated as part of a larger group of *five* similes. Of these, the last three are applied in turn to each of the *trikāya* triad of three embodiments (here called *svābhāvikakāya, sāṃbhogikakāya, nirmāṇaṃ,* the latter probably just *metri causa*). This is structurally analogous to the way that RGV 2, as we have already seen in our summary of the logical structure of the chapter as a whole above, will follow the *karman* passage in which *vimuktikāya-dharmakāya* falls with the treatment of the *trikāya* triad under the head of the sixth member of the rubric, *vṛtti.* As in RGV 2, moreover, before turning to *trikāya,* RGV 1.149-150 first proposes a twofold division, which Takasaki proposes to map onto the twofold model of *vimukti-* vs. *dharmakāya.* This twofold division is mapped onto the remaining, first two similes in the fivefold group.

The twofold division here is between *prakṛtisthagotra,* "the aboriginal [Buddha-] element/lineage", and *samudānītagotra,* "the [Buddha-] element/lineage which has attained highest development":

> "The *gotra,* it should be understood, is of two kinds . . . . that which is aboriginal, [having existed since] beginningless time, and that which is the highest attainment. It is thought that the three embodiments are obtained from that twofold *gotra:* the first from the first [*svābhāvikakāya* from *prakṛtisthagotra*], and the latter two from the second [*sāṃbhogika-* and *nairmāṇikakāya* from *uttarasamudānītagotra*]."[2724]

In other words, we have the ground prepared for a treatment of *trikāya* by consideration of a twofold division, just as in Ch. 2.

[2723] The passage analysed here comprises 1.149-1.152, Johnston 81-82, Takasaki 288-289. The *Vyākhyā* following does not strike me as relevant to the points that concern us here.

[2724] Referring to 1.149-150: *gotraṃ taddvividhaṃ jñeyāṃ nidhānaphalavṛkṣavat/ anādiprakṛtsthaṃ ca samudānītam uttaram// buddhakāyatrayâvāptir asmād gotradvayān matā/ prathamāt prathamaḥ kāyo dvitīyād dvau tu paścimau,* Johnston 71-72, Takasaki 288.

However, 1.149-150 goes beyond this, to state that this twofold ground is the *basis* for the attainment of *trikāya.* The discussion in the *śloka* in Ch. 2 following the elaboration of the *vimuktikāya/dharmakāya* twofold division (i.e. the portion at 2.22-27), is by contrast preoccupied by the distracting project of showing that these two bodies are one despite their apparent division,[2725] and that as such, they are immutable, imperishable etc.[2726] – without first really telling us in what consists their distinction! However, if we take the analogy at 1.149-150 as our guide, I believe we can see that in fact, as Takasaki hints, basically the same conception is at work.

First, within the framework of this exposition of the *karman* category itself, the twofold *vimukti-dharmakāya* is said three times to be a "foundation" (*pada*): twice without any particular reference;[2727] and once specifically as the "seat (*āspada*[2728]) for pure *dharmas* (*śukladharma*)".[2729] These hints already suggest that, as at 1.149-150, this twofold unit is also a kind of basis.[2730]

Second, however, this clue, inconclusive on its own, is fleshed out if we expand our purview beyond the category of "function" alone, and rather treat the last three members of the sixfold rubric as an integral unit. We have already seen above that when the commentarial verse (*śloka*)

[2725] *vimuktidharmakāyau ca veditavyau dvir ekadhā . . .* etc., 2.22, Johnston 86, Takasaki 320.

[2726] We will return to these dimensions of the embodiment doctrine at work here below.

[2727] *anāsravatvād vyāpitvād asaṃskṛtapadatvataḥ,* 2.22cd; *padaṃ tadamalajñānam,* 2.26c; Johnston 86, Takasaki 321.

[2728] On *āspada,* see Takasaki 321 n. 62. Ch. gives 體 "body" here!

[2729] *śukladharmâspadatvataḥ,* 2.26d, Johnston 86, Takasaki 321.

[2730] If the analogy to 1.149-150 really holds, note, we would expect that *vimuktikāya* is conceived of as the ground for *svābhāvikakāya,* and *dharmakāya* for the other two embodiments.

spells out the connections between various categories in introducing the next category of "concomitants" (*yoga*) at 2.30, it says:

> "[Function, *karman*] for his own sake and for the sake of others is indicated by the [two] embodiments of liberation and *dharma* (*vimukti-/dharmakāya*); on this basis (*āśraya*) in [action] for his own sake and for the sake of others [is based] concomitance [accompaniment, *yoga*] by qualities such as inconceivability, etc."[2731]

As we also saw above, in the next bridging passage at the opening of the section on the last member of the sixfold rubric, "manifestation" (*vṛtti*), the commentary goes on to say,

> "Because of the concomitance of its unique qualities (*āveṇikadharmayutatvād*), it should be understood that buddhahood (*tathāgatatvam*) manifests itself in [all] the destinies of rebirth as the cause and support (*ādhānanimittam*) of the welfare and happiness of worldlings by means of three immaculate bodies, viz. *svābhāvika-, sāṃbhogika-* and *nairmāṇika-;* and this is a manifestation inseparable from its unconditioned qualities . . ."[2732]

In other words, putting this passage together with the logic we have already traced through the exposition of the categories of "function" and "concomitants": (1) "function" both for the Buddha's own sake and for the sake of others is a basis for (2) various concomitant qualities which are (3) inseparable from manifestation in the three bodies. In other words, the twofold basis/foundation (*pada*) represented by the *vimukti-* and *dharmakāya* of RGV 2 is the ground for the *trikāya,* via the intermediary step of "qualities" (*guṇa*) or "concomitants" (*yoga*).

The analogy that Takasaki hints at between these two passages proves to be well-founded and quite complete, therefore, and further, throws much light on the initially cryptic division of the "function of the twofold wisdom" of RGV 2 between *vimuktikāya* and *dharmakāya.* It seems clear that the text intends, similarly to 1.149-150, to convey the basic idea of a division between aspects of the underlying ground of the bodies that are for the Buddha himself (*svârtha*), on the

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[2731] See n. 2685.

[2732] See n. 2687.

one hand, and for others (*parârtha*) on the other hand. It seems further that this distinction is intimately related to the *trikāya* model.

The next question, therefore, is obviously exactly how the *trikāya* map onto the twofold division in the ground of the Buddha's qualities and embodiment. In answering this next question, I think that another parallel passage to which Takasaki points us elsewhere in the text proves illuminating, if not precisely in the ways that Takasaki himself seems to understand.

5.3.6.6 A parallel twofold structure at RGV 1.145-147

The second passage that betrays a conceptual parallel to RGV 2 is drawn from RGV 1.145-147, earlier in the same long section at the end of Ch. 1 in which the text applies the *Tathāgatagarbha-sūtra's* nine similes to the absolute.[2733] Here, however, the text applies (the first) three of the nine similes to the *dharmakāya* itself. The details of how these similes are supposed to illustrate the doctrine at issue once more need not detain us. For our present purposes, the most relevant points are that once more, the frame is the twofold *jñāna;* that we encounter a twofold division in an apparent ground, this time the *dharmadhātu* itself; and that it is possible, once more, to analyse this division in terms of a basic distinction between what is for the Buddha himself and what is for others.

In this passage, the *dharmakāya* is said to have two aspects (*dvidhā*), viz. (1) the utterly immaculate *dharmadhātu (dharmadhātuḥ sunirmalaḥ*); and (2) the Dharma *qua* teaching (*nayadeśanā*), which is spoken of as the "outflow" (*niṣyanda*) of the *dharmadhatu*.[2734] (1) The

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[2733] RGV 1.145-147 and especially intervening *Vyākhyā,* Takasaki 284-286, Johnston 80.

[2734] Note in this regard that in Ch. 2, the *sāṃbhogikakāya,* which is similarly characterised in terms of teaching (*vicitradharma, dharmâvabhāsa*), is also said to be a *niṣyanda,* this time of "the purification of compassion" (*karuṇāśuddhi*); see 2.49, Johnston 87, Takasaki 328.

dharmadhātu is further said to be the object or "sphere of operation" (*gocaraviṣaya*) of *nirvikalpakajñāna* (here = *avikalpajñāna*), which we recall is the basic point of reference in the RGV 2 analysis of "function" (*karman*) at the centre of our discussion here. By implication, therefore, as Takasaki suggests,[2735] (2) the teaching as "outflow" of the *dharmadhātu* is the object or sphere of operation of *tatpṛṣṭhalabdhajñāna*. A final point of contrast between these two kinds of *dharma* is that (1) the *dharmadhātu* is "the *dharma* realised by the Tathāgatas for themselves" (*tathāgatānāṃ pratyām adhigamadharma*), whereas (2) the Dharma *qua* teaching is the cause for the attainment of the *dharmadhātu* (*tatprāptihetu*), inasmuch as it is constituted in the production of provisional signs oriented towards other sentient beings (that the Buddha) in accordance with the capacity of each to be guided (*yathāvainayikaparasattveṣu prajñaptiprabhavaḥ*).

In other words, if we cut to the chase through the thickets of technical terms: it is possible to speak of the *dharmakāya* in two senses. In the first sense, the "*dharma*" meant is the absolute reality of all things (*dharmadhātu = sarvadharmadharmatā*), which is the *dharma* realised directly by the Buddha for himself, and the object of his non-conceptual gnosis. In the second sense, the "*dharma*" meant is the Dharma he teaches to other sentient beings to lead them to the same realisation, which is manifest in the world (I take it that this is what is meant by the notion of it being an "outflow" from the ineffable[2736] *dharmadhātu*). This *dharma* is oriented to and for the purposes of other beings, and which is (by implication) the object of the Buddha's merciful worldly wisdom that enables him to engage in expedient means (*tatpṛṣṭhalabdhajñāna*).

[2735] *Study* 30.

[2736] On the ineffability of the *dharmadhātu* in this exact context, see 1.146, *lokôttaratvāl loke 'sya dṛṣṭāntânuypalabdhiḥ*, "Because it is actually supramundane, there is no way to obtain an analogy for it in this world," Johnston 70, Takasaki 285.

To bring these ideas back to the interpretation of the RGV 2 opposition between *vimuktikāya* and *dharmakāya*, then, it is notable (1) that the same categories of twofold *jñāna* are at issue and organise the twofold opposition in analysing the *dharmakāya*; (2) that this twofold division relates to a twofold division in the ground, here the *dharmakāya*; and (3) that without the terms actually being used in RGV 1, it is perfectly clear that the opposition between the way the *dharma* is "for the Buddha himself" and the way the Dharma is presented "for the sake of others" (*sva/parârtha*) is also central to the twofold opposition proposed. I think we are therefore entitled to think that we have here yet another aspect of the same conception of the Buddha's embodiments treated in Chapter 2, and therefore to use this passage to cast further light on the analysis there.

The implication of such an approach would be that the distinction between "for the Buddha himself" and "for others" should be reflected in a difference in the conception of *dharma* at play, and particularly that buddhahood as it operates "for the sake of others" should involve teaching (*dharma*). But in Chapter 2, as we have already seen, this is indeed the case at least as far as the category of "for the sake of others" is concerned. The "function" section (*karman*) opens by saying that the category of "for the sake of others" (*parârtha*) entails *teaching*, along with appearing in visible form, by means of a twofold embodiment.[2737] We already saw above a number of reasons that can further verify that this appearance and teaching by means of a twofold embodiment refers particularly to the *sāṃbhogikakāya* and *nairmāṇikakāya.* We have also already seen in the "manifestation" (*vṛtti*) section that the presentation of both the *sāṃbhogikakāya* and the *nairmāṇikakāya* individually entails teaching.

[2737] See once more the latter part of the passage cited above n. 2680.

We can further note that this triangulates very well with the main lesson we drew from the comparison between RGV 2 and SdhN 10. There too, we saw that *dharmakāya* seemed to be conceived of as a ground for the visible display of buddhahood in *nirmāṇakāya,* and also, more elaborately, in terms of the teaching.

5.3.6.7 A summary interpretation of *vimuktikāya* vs. *dharmakāya*

Thus, to summarise the comparison with the various parallels in RGV 1 that I have examined over the course of the last few pages:

whose sake?	"own sake" *svârtha*	"sake of others" *parârtha*
twofold *jñāna*	*nirvikalpakajñāna*	*tatpṛṣṭhalabdhajñāna*
"body" comprising ground in Ch. 2	*dharmakāya*	*vimuktikāya*?
aspect of *gotra* as ground at 1.149-150	*prakṛtisthagotra*	*samudānītagotra*
in terms of twofold division at 1.145-147	*dharmadhātu*	*tadniṣyanda* = Dharma *qua* teaching
in terms of *trikāya*: 1.145-147, Ch. 2 *vṛtti*	*svābhāvikakāya*	*sāṃbhogikakāya* and *nairmāṇikakāya*

Combining the clues afforded by these parallels with the hints we gathered from the examination of SdhN, and the lessons of our structural analysis of the logic of RGV 2 itself, it seems to me that the most plausible interpretation of the *vimuktikāya-dharmakāya* opposition in the RGV 2 analysis of "function", which accounts most economically for most of the evidence, is as follows.

The opposition between *vimuktikāya* and *dharmakāya* refers to a twofold division of the ground of the Buddha's embodiments into (1) an intrinsic and ineffable aspect, which is identical with the ultimate ground of all things (*vimuktikāya*); and (2) a resultative and manifest aspect (*dharmakāya*). In one perspective, considered in and of themselves, these two aspects, both being aspects of the ground itself, are both the ground for the achievement of ends "for the sake of the Buddha himself" and "for the sake of others". In another perspective, however, i.e.

that of the way they are made manifest (*vṛtti*), we can conceive of this twofold division as tending on either side more in the direction of what is "for the Buddha's own sake" (*vimuktikāya*) or "for the sake of others" (*dharmakāya*) respectively. In the analysis of the "manifestation" of buddhahood (*vṛtti*), this twofold division is further ramified in the threefold division of the *trikāya* schema, whereby the *svābhāvikakāya* is embodiment for the Buddha himself, thus founded on the intrinsic aspect of the ground, and *sāṃbhogika-* and *nairmāṇikakāya* are embodiment for others, founded on the extrinsic aspect of the ground.

In these terms, the twofold embodiments "for the sake of others" further do their work for others primarily by making buddhahood visible in the world (manifestation) and by teaching. Reference to SdhN and RGV 1.145-147 especially make it clear that it is in this latter sense of "teaching" that the *dharma-* of *dharmakāya* is to be understood here. Thus, in one sense (as ground), *dharmakāya* in this analysis is indeed, as we would expect, close to *svābhāvikakāya*, which is the aspect of embodiment as "manifestation" considered as in fact identical to an inalienable from the ground itself. In another sense, however, *dharmakāya* and *svābhāvikakāya* must be clearly distinguished from one another, since the former is understood, where a distinction must be made, as "for the sake of others", whereas the latter seems more orientated towards "the Buddha's own sake".

I do not pretend that this resolves all the difficulties with these two pairs of concepts (*vimuktikāya* vs. *dharmakāya*, "own sake" vs. "sake of others") or their interrelations. However, I think that those difficulties that do linger may not be soluble. I say this first on textual grounds, since I think I have pursued all the relevant evidence in the above analysis. However, I also thing there are *a priori* reasons for suspecting the problem somewhat intractable, which relate to the question of why the authors of RGVV felt motivated to complicate the analysis of the

problematic of embodiment by combining the *vimuktikāya-dharmakāya* analysis with the *trikāya* model to begin with. It is worth our while to ask, indeed, in light of all the above analysis: What does RGVV gain by introducing this additional level of complexity? What question was it trying to answer in doing so? What conceptual problems or tensions might have remained, even with the synthesis of several models achieved by the *trikāya* model itself?

I think that the answer to these questions lies in the vexing category of what is "for the Buddha's own sake" as opposed to "for the sake of others". We have seen that throughout the materials we have examined, the location of the precise watershed between these two categories has been a constant source of trouble. It is the nub of the puzzling ambiguity in the verses of MSA, around which sprang the further peculiar divergence in the texts themselves between the majority testimony of the Sanskrit and Chinese texts and an anomalous reading in the Tibetan. It is also an issue on which RGVV itself wavers, even within a very short compass, saying first that *dharmakāya* is exclusively "for the sake of others"; then that both *vimuktikāya* and *dharmakāya* are both "for the Buddha's own sake" and "for the sake of others"; and then leaving open the puzzling question of whose sake the *svābhāvikakāya* is for, and how, if it is for the Buddha's own sake, to reconcile this fact with the apparent identity of *svābhāvikakāya* and *dharmakāya* in other respects.

It seems to me that the difficulty here lies in a fundamental tension between the idea of buddhahood as something utterly transcendent, and the idea, implicit in the notion of any embodiment (that is, locus of being in the world) of buddhahood "for its own sake", that it can also somehow be genuinely and forcefully immanent. I have already referred to this underlying tension above, and said it it may lurk behind the textual discrepancies between

different version of MSA.[2738] There, I anticipated larger arguments in my Conclusion to this dissertation about the "antinomy of immanence". For the moment, I will merely suggest that it was perhaps an attempt – even if not an entirely successful one! – to come to grips with this vexed issue that led RGVV to introduce the opposition of *vimuktikāya* and *dharmakāya* into the embodiment doctrine of *trikāya*.

In an especially forceful manner, this gives the lie to the rather fatuous teleological notion that *trikāya* doctrine *could* ever have achieved a crowning consummation of the problem of embodiment in Buddhism. As I will argue at greater length in the Conclusion to this dissertation, the problematic that I call the "antinomy of immanence" is real and profound. It would be silly in any case to expect that any thinker or text, however brilliant, could come up with a final solution. If my interpretation is sound, we also already find here, in one of the closest places we know to the very source of *trikāya* doctrine in MSA itself, empirical evidence that this supposed synthesis was already felt to be inadequate, and perhaps had begun to come unravelled along one important seam.

The considerable textual and conceptual difficulties with which we have wrestled in the course of this analysis of the opposition between *vimuktikāya* and *dharmakāya* in RGV, therefore, rather than being the products of angels-on-the-head-of-a-pin hairsplitting ("jeux des clercs", in Demiéville's memorable phrase), arguably represent local reflections of the largest-scale tensions informing discourse about the Buddha's bodies. On the other hand, they provide us with a forceful illustration of the on ongoing dynamism and creative instability in embodiment doctrine that resulted from these tensions, even in the very heartland of the supposed

[2738] See p. 1241.

synthesis so beloved of the teleological portrayal of its history. We will return to these larger themes later in this dissertation.

5.3.6.8 Transformed function of the six senses in RGV *kārikā*

We will now close the complex analysis into which the RGVV's comments on the category of "function" within the sixfold rubric have led us, and turn to the analysis of the same category in the root verses. We have seen at length that the commentarial layer of RGV (i.e. RGVV) interprets the fourth category of "function" (*karman*), within the sixfold rubric that structures the Ch. 2 as a whole, in terms of an opposition between *vimuktikāya* and *dharmakāya*. By contrast, in its root verse (*kārikā*) interpretation of the category of "function" within the (2.18-20), the text begins by calling buddhahood (under the name of *tathāgatatvaṃ*[2739]) the "foundation" (*pada*). This recalls, and probably means approximately the same thing as, the notion that it is the *āśraya* ("basis", "ground").

Upon the basis of this understanding, the text then explores a particular dimension of the analogy between buddhahood (*tathāgatavaṃ*) and space.[2740] On this analogy, space is considered the "cause" (*kāraṇa*) of the ordinary objects of the six sense-organs.[2741] Likewise, buddhahood is said to be the cause (*kāraṇa;* also "true cause" *nimittabhūta*) for the experience of a different set of objects of the six senses (*ṣaḍindriyârthânubhava*) in the case of the enlightened (*satām,* glossed *dhīrāṇāṃ* i.e. "the wise"). Respectively, these are:

[2739] Some of the differences in vocabulary through this section may of course be *metri causa*.

[2740] Already mentioned above n. 2695.

[2741] See once more n. 2695, and especially the first passage cited there from the commentarial verse to this same notion at 2.27-28, which makes clearer the question of what space is supposed to be the "cause" (there *nimitta*). The understanding of causality operative here is not entirely clear to me, but perhaps simply meaning that space is the primary *necessary* condition for all such objects?

(1) the manifestation of "visible forms created by his mastery" (*vibhūtirūpârthavidarśana*);

(2) the "pure hearing of [his] excellent preaching" (*sukathāśuciśrava*);

(3) the "pure scent of the morality of the Tathāgatas" (*tathāgatānāṃ śuciśīlajighraṇa*);

(4) "tasting the supreme savour of the great, noble, true Dharma" (*mahâryasaddharmarasâgravindana*);

(5) the "experience of the pleasant touch of absorption" (*samādhisaṃsparśasukhânubhūti*);

(6) the "cognition of the doctrine (*naya*) that is profound in its essence" (*svabhāvagāmbhīryanayâvabodhana*).[2742]

The mapping onto the ordinary six senses is clear. In the case of scent, taste, and perhaps touch, we might suspect a somewhat forced analogy. In the other cases, by comparison, it is a simpler matter of sanctified objects particular to the sense in question.

This is more or less all the (root) text gives us (we will come to the way the commentarial layer picks this reading up below), and on the face of it, is somewhat cryptic. What does it mean to say that the "function" ("work", "activity" etc., *karman*) of buddhahood produces special objects of the senses? However, I think it might not be reading too much into the text if we observe at least two things about this passage.

First, it is notable, in light of the overall connection we have observed between the elaboration of *trikāya* doctrine and *āśrayaparāvṛtti* here and in MSA 9, that the underlying model here is in fact that of the "six sense bases" (*ṣaḍāyatana*). We saw earlier in this dissertation that this was

[2742] RGV 2.18d-20, Johnston 82-83, Takasaki 319-320.

an important model of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* from early on (§5.2.5). Indeed, we also saw (§5.2.8) that in one pivotal, relatively early attempt to articulate the pre- and post-liberation aspects of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* by means of the idea of *sa-* and *nirupadhiśeṣanirvāṇadhātu*,[2743] the "six sense bases" model of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* was even explicitly linked with the "purification of Thusness", which is also the underlying model for the post-enlightenment *āśrayaparāvṛtti* in the present RGV passage. On the basis of these factors, it seems plausible to suggest that the idea of the transformation of the six sense-bases upon enlightenment, which was already by this date an established component of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* doctrine, is behind the ideas laid out in the present passage.

If this is so, however, then we must immediately recognise that in the present passage, we see quite a different conception of the transformation of the six sense-bases. This leads us to the second point. As we saw earlier in this dissertation, in the "Nirvāṇa Chapter", the emphasis seems primarily to be on these six sense-bases as physical organs, that is, on the rubric as an analysis of the physical body. Here, the emphasis has shifted to the *objects* of those organs and their experience. This is related to another difference in emphasis. In the "Nirvāṇa Chapter" use of the *ṣaḍāyatana* model, the emphasis was on the six sense-organs in their relevance for the Arhat himself. Here, however, although the evidence is perhaps not entirely unequivocal, it is quite unlikely that the emphasis is on these sanctified alternative objects of the six sense-organs for the Buddha himself, for two reasons.

First, the tangibility of these various objects is explicitly contrasted (2.20) to the Tathāgata, who is free of all invisible marks.[2744] This same Tathāgata, like space, etc., is the buddhahood that is

[2743] The "Nirvāṇa Chapter" of the *Viniścayasaṃgrahaṇī*, early at least relative to RGV and MSA because in YBh.

[2744] *tathāgatavyoma nimittavarjitam,* Johnston 93, Takasaki 320; already cited above, n. 2744.

the cause of these sense-objects, but it is this buddhahood, and no visible form, that is equated with the category of "for his own sake" (*svârtha*). It is thus unlikely that even these elevated objects of the senses would be experienced by the Buddha in and for himself, and rather much more likely that they are elaborated for other people.

Second, although we might imagine aspects of some of the objects listed in which they could be enjoyed by the Buddha for himself, in some cases the emphasis seems clearly to be on these things as presented to others: for instance, it seems downright incoherent to claim that he would manifest a visible form by his supernatural power for himself to see (1); similarly, the Buddha might enjoy the Dharma in some sense, but he does not preach it to himself. In this regard, also, then, it seems that these exalted versions of the sense-objects are probably elaborated for others (*parârtha*!). This contrasts with the emphasis on on the sense for the Arhat himself in the use of the six-sense-base model in the "Nirvāṇa Chapter".

We can relate both these points, further, to a third difference between the way the six sense organs feature here and the way they featured in older models of *āśrayaparāvṛtti*. In older models, the six sense organs were relevant primarily to the analysis of the "basis" or embodiment *prior* to the revolutionary transformation that attended enlightenment. Upon that transformation, the sense organs become at best irrelevant; the Arhat came to focus continually upon the true nature of the absolute as his object, for instance, or (in a related notion) pure Thusness replaced the six sense organs as the true "basis". Here in RGV 2, however, it seems clear that the extraordinary function (or objects) of the six sense organs envisaged can only *succeed upon* revolutionary transformation. This is shown by the very nature of their description, and is also implied by the location of this analysis in the overall

structure of the chapter, after the introduction of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* itself under the aegis of the third category of "result" (*phala*).

If, then, the present passage does indeed echo the older idea that the attainment of buddhahood entails a radical transformation of the six senses, it would seem that it significantly adapts that idea to place the emphasis on the Buddha's manifestation, by his power, of special objects of the senses to other beings, in order to save them. This means that rather than being discarded entirely ("abandoned" etc.), the old "basis" is itself grounded anew in the new "basis" comprised by buddhahood (Thusness etc.). As a result, it seems, it is "turned outwards", as it were, to fulfil the ends of the Buddha's salvific work.

This begins to move us in the direction of my most basic contention about the relationship between *āśrayaparāvṛtti* and *trikāya,* and indeed, about *trikāya per se*: that *trikāya* is, in effect, an extension of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* theory, and answers the question, "What next?" of the radical transformation in the Buddha's embodiment that ensues upon his attainment of liberation for himself. To anticipate, we might say that beginning with the "function" category of the sixfold rubric, the text begins to develop the question of what the radically transformed "basis" is a basis *for*. The answer to this question, as we have seen, is twofold: it is a basis for liberation "for the sake of the Buddha himself", and "for the sake of others".

It is this latter aspect, in particular, that is new, and that represents the main thrust of *trikāya* theory. On the older versions of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* theory, the emphasis was entirely upon the nature of the revolutionary transformation in embodiment as it bore upon and was experienced by the liberated person himself (the Arhat, Buddha etc.). However, one of the most important things we know about Buddhas (as SdhN 10, for example, aptly reminds us) is

that, unlike other awakened beings, they work ceaselessly, boundlessly and perfectly for the liberation of other beings also. In MSA and RGV, *trikāya* theory is primarily the theory of how the transformation (*parāvṛtti*) of the Buddha's embodiment subsequently manifests itself (*vṛtti*) for the sake of other beings. It is for precisely this reason that it is expounded primarily under the aegis of "manifestation", the sixth member of the sixfold rubric.

To bring these considerations back to bear upon the transformation of the (objects of the) six senses propounded by the RGV root verses as the "function" of buddhahood, it seems clear that the main point these root verses make is this. Upon *āśrayaparāvṛtti,* buddhahood itself is a ground (*pada*) for a transformed function of the six senses. It manifests special objects pointing to the transcendent for each of those senses, and so leads sentient beings to salvation. This prepares the "ground" (the very notion of "ground") for the exposition of *trikāya,* as the concrete medium for this salvific work, under the aegis of the sixth member of the rubric, "manifestation".

This is an apt place to turn briefly to the first of our comparisons with the much briefer and more cryptic treatments of these same parts of the sixfold (*svabhāva*-cause-result-"function"/*karman-yoga-vṛtti*) rubric in MSA.

We already saw above that MSA's treatment of the first three members of the rubric differs somewhat from that in RGV:[2745] (1) *svabhāva* comprises a gnostic aspect in addition to pure Thusness; (2) the "cause" of attainment is intense cultivation (*bhāvanā*) of *jñāna,* rather than that *jñāna* itself; (3) the "result" attained is already a twofold support for work for sentient beings. In sum, it thus seems that RGV has discarded MSA's emphasis on cultivation (to achieve

[2745] See p. 1233.

perhaps a more subitist and gnostic emphasis), extracted *jñāna* from *svabhāva* and elevated it to the status of (2) independent cause, inserted *āśrayaparāvṛtti* as an additional mediating phase in the capacity of (3) "result", and bumped the twofold support along to (4) as "function" instead of "result".

Despite these differences in the early members of the rubric, however, I think that aspects of RGV's treatment (4) "function" is also reconcilable with what MSA says about that category in its own right. Specifically, we see that compatibility in the notion of the transformed (objects of the) six senses.

At MSA 21.60 and Bh, the "function " or "works" of the Buddha are said to be the "liberation of all beings".[2746] However, at MSA 9.58 (implicitly in the *kārikā,* explicitly in Bh), *karma* is further glossed as referring to the "threefold magical emanation (*nirmāṇa*) of [the Buddha's] body, speech and mind".[2747] The most consistent reading of these passages, I contend, is the reading we would give them in light of the RGV treatment of the same topic. Thus, they already have to do with the problematic of embodiment, perhaps at one remove.[2748] Within this framework, the category of "function" or "works" is understood as referring globally, in the first instance, to the way buddhahood works in the world for the salvation of sentient beings (MSA 21), , despite the fact that in and of itself it is intangible, invisible etc. It does this by various kinds of "magical emanation" (*nirmāṇa*, MSA 9) or the operation of its "power" (*vibhūti,* RGV). More specifically, according to RGV, it works for the salvation of beings by manifesting itself to beings as a set of sense-objects which lead to the realisation of the truth.

[2746] *sarvasattvavimocaka; sarvasattvavimocakaṃ karma* Bh, Lévi MSA I, 188; Thurman et al., 343.

[2747] *kāyavākcittanirmāṇa,* 58a; *trividhaṃ kāyâdinirmāṇaṃ karma,* Bh; Lévi MSA I, 44.

[2748] This problematic is therefore not restricted in MSA to the category of *vṛtti* alone, any more than it is in RGV, appearances in MSA to the contrary.

If the two texts are thus to be interpreted as in accord with one another on this point, it has two further implications for our reading of MSA 9.58: (1) *nirmāṇa* here does not only refer to the *nairmāṇikakāya,* as we might think at first, but also to *sāṃbhogikakāya,* and is an umbrella category that explains the operation of both kinds of embodiment together;[2749] (2) "body, speech and mind" operates here, like the sixfold model of the senses, as a rubric to organise objects of experience (and not, as is more usually the case, to organise categories of moral action). In both these respects, it seems, the terms of MSA 9.58 are unusual, but I believe nonetheless that this interpretation fits well with both MSA 21.60 and RGV, and makes the best sense of MSA's treatment of this category.

In sum, then, the treatment of "function" in the RGV root verses and MSA seems fundamentally compatible, despite marked surface differences in expression. In both cases, "function" is understood as referring in some sense to the manifestation of buddhahood to (the sense organs of) sentient beings, implicitly in order to save them. How, then, are we to reconcile these treatments of the category of "function" with its treatment in terms of the twofold ground comprised by *vimuktikāya* and *dharmakāya* in RGVV?

5.3.6.9 The relation between transformed sense function and the twofold ground of *vimuktikāya* and *dharmakāya*

After posing its twofold division between *vimuktikāya* and *dharmakāya,* the commentarial verse (*śloka*) actually devotes most of its efforts[2750] not to expounding their differences, but to

[2749] This possibility is supported by the fact that throughout MSA and RGV, *sāṃbhogikakāya* and *nairmāṇikakāya* are treated as belonging to a single category of types of embodiment that is opposed to *svābhāvikakāya/dharmakāya,* as when the latter is said to be the *āśraya* for both the others, for instance; cf. also the understanding that they are both types of *rūpakāya* at RGV 2.61, to which we will return below.

[2750] 2.21-2.26, Johnston 83, Takasaki 320-321.

explaining the fact that they are in fact "one" despite their apparent division,[2751] the reasons for this, etc. The main concern here is the fact that this twofold ground is ultimately unaffected by any apparent involvement in the world. It seems therefore that for the commentarial verse, the nature of the "function" under discussion is relatively unproblematic. The main interest is in averting a perceived danger that the mere fact of "function" (which presumably is thus understood as in the first instance function in the world) will lead to the misunderstanding that the ground itself is somehow affected by the world in which it functions. We will return to some aspects of these verses below, but they need not detain us here.

After expounding the actual unity of the twofold ground, the *śloka* finish by returning to the interpretation of "function" (*karman*) given by the root verses (*kārikā*), and recapitulating the notion that buddhahood, here glossed in the terms of the *śloka's* understanding of buddhahood as the ground comprised by the twofold body,[2752] is the cause for a transformed kind of sense-experience. This presents us with the opportunity to deliberate on the relationship between the explication of these categories in the *kārikā,* that is, between the ground of twofold embodiment and transformed sense experience as dimensions of the "function" of buddhahood. It is clear that the *śloka* intends its exposition of ground comprised by the twofold embodiment of *vimukti-* and *dharmakāya* as a more detailed exploration of the role of buddhahood as the "cause".

[2751] *veditavyau dvir ekadhā* etc., 2.22b, Johnston 83, Takasaki 320.

[2752] In light of the above analysis, I think Takasaki is simply mistaken to contemplate the possibility that the "twofold body" that the text says (in his translation) "on account of its connection with the undefiled character ,/Is the cause for wise men to give rise to/ Immaculate virtues in the objects of the sense-organs" (2.28) could refer to the "twofold *rūpakāya*", as he suggests 321 n. 63. He is also therefore wrong to translate "twofold [*apparitional*] Body" (my emphasis). As I will immediately argue, the whole point of this section in the *śloka* is precisely to explain the twofold body, viz. *vimukti-* vs. *dharmakāya*, as the ground (or, here, cause) of the sense-experience described as the "function" by the *kārikā*.

As we noted above, the RGV root verses (*kārikā*) actually begin by discussing buddhahood as the foundation (*pada*) and cause of the transformed function of the six sense-organs (to manifest buddhahood to sentient beings). This fits perfectly with our understanding that the twofold ground of *vimuktikāya-dharmakāya* is, in exactly this manner, the ground for the manifestation of buddhahood. In the exposition of "function" in MSA, by contrast, there is no mention of the notion of "ground"; but we have noted that a similar notion (*ādhāna*) does feature in the exposition of the preceding category of "result", aspects of which, we saw, seem to have been collapsed by RGV into the category of "function". Thus, with suitable adjustment for differences in expression in the three contexts, it seems that MSA, RGV root verses and RGVV are all in agreement that taken as a whole, "function" entails the relationship between a "ground" of manifestation of buddhahood for sentient beings, and that actual manifestation in some form.

We can paraphrase the central thrust of the category of "function", therefore, by saying that "function" is most fundamentally the category under which RGV considers buddhahood as it acts, after the realisation of buddhahood in time, to ground manifestations of buddhahood to sentient beings for salvific ends. Given that this whole category and its context is steeped in the problematic of *āśrayaparāvṛtti,* as we have seen through our analysis, it seems clear that this function as ground for the salvific manifestation of buddhahood is the way the "basis" or "ground" (*āśraya, pada, pratiṣṭha, ādhāna* etc.) remains a "ground" even after its revolutionary transformation. The texts of course recognise that this ground continues to have an intrinsic relationship to and significance *for buddhahood itself.* But against that background, the first impetus of this category, and what is new about it in the context of the history of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* doctrine as a doctrine of embodiment, is the consideration of the relation of this ground to what is "for the sake of others". Thus, in spirit, the analysis of MSA and RGV alike,

and their elaboration of *trikāya* doctrine, is entirely in keeping with the initial question of SdhN, which we have identified as a likely immediate forerunner of the general problematic here: What is distinctive about the *āśrayaparāvṛtti* of the Buddha? The answer, it seems, is that the Buddha's *āśrayaparāvṛtti,* uniquely, is not only relevant to the Buddha himself, like the liberation(al body) of a Śrāvaka or Pratyekabuddha, but rather, that it transforms further (*/vṛt*), tumbling forth (*pra/vṛt*) into the world in a profusion of forms to save all beings. *Trikāya* then is the rubric under which these various forms of further transformation or manifestation (*vṛtti*) are analysed.

Thus, I contend that the framing role played by *āśrayaparāvṛtti* in the contexts in which we find *trikāya* first elaborated, which we observed at the outset of this analysis, is not an incidental feature of those contexts, nor is the concept idly invoked. Rather, it is a clue that *trikāya* is intended as an extension or outgrowth of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* itself. I will return to this point in the conclusion to this section of this dissertation below.

5.3.7 A divergence in interpretation of *trikāya* doctrine in *Mahāyānasaṃgraha* 10

This concludes the examination of the treatment of *trikāya* in MSA and RGV, and related concepts in SdhN. Before turning to the general conclusions of this section, therefore, the only task remaining to us is to examine briefly the treatment of *trikāya* in the tenth chapter of the *Mahāyānasaṃgraha* (MSg)*,* which I noted in the introduction to this section of this dissertation is, along with RGV, one of our two closest contexts to MSA itself for *trikāya* doctrine. As such, it provides us with a valuable additional angle on the ideas under study here. I will confine myself to observing one key respect in which the text differs from the other texts studied

above, in order to avoid a misconception that they represent some kind of "orthodox" position on *trikāya* in early Yogācāra.[2753]

In order to bring out the significance of this key difference, it will be useful to first have in hand a sense of the extent to which MSg overlaps with our other texts in its treatment of *trikāya*. As its strong basis in MSA would lead us to expect, MSg's treatment of *trikāya* accords with that of MSA and RGV in many respects. As in MSA and RGV, the *parinirvāṇa*, along with the other stereotyped acts of the Buddha's career, is given a docetistic interpretation under the aegis of the *nairmāṇikakāya.*[2754] As in these other texts, buddhahood (considered under its aspect as the *dharmakāya*) is eternal (*nitya*).[2755] As in the other texts, *āśrayaparāvṛtti* forms an essential part of the fundamental frame within which *trikāya* is considered; it is conceived of as the defining feature of the abandonment that the text conceives of as the fruit of practice (*bras bu'i spangs pa* **phalaprahāṇa*).[2756] As in RGV, the *dharmakāya* is obtained in part on the basis of the twofold gnosis.[2757] However, as in MSA, an important part is also played in this process by intensive

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[2753] MSg is of course a complex text, and in order to do full justice to the doctrines of *trikāya* presented in its tenth chapter alone would require a detailed study.

[2754] 10.1, Lamotte I, 83 II, 268. At 10.36, the "impossibility" of the reality of the *nairmāṇikakāya* is even expounded for various reasons, and here, consistently, we are also told that a real *parinirvāṇa* of the Buddha is impossible: "The Buddha made his vow, applied himself with effort, and attained his great awakening for the sake of all sentient beings (*sarvasattvârtha*). It is therefore impossible that he would enter completely into *parinirvāṇa*, because his vows would then not bear fruit;" Lamotte I, 98, II, 334. These firmly docetistic pronouncements, however, must be read in balance against the non-dualistic thrust of the text elsewhere, which we will see immediately below pushes against a docetism as clear-cut as RGV's.

[2755] 10.3, Lamotte I, 85, II, 273-274; 10.29, Lamotte I, 93, II, 315. This notion is discussed at 10.37 also, where it is explained that in virtue of the dependence of the two visible bodies on the *dharmakāya,* it is possible for the *tathāgatakāya* to be eternal even though they are not; Lamotte I, 98, II, 339-340.

[2756] 9.1, Lamotte I, 89, II, 259.

[2757] 10.4, Lamotte I, 85, II, 274-275.

cultivation (*bhāvanā*),[2758] suggesting on the whole that MSg may be inclined to reject the apparent greater subitism of RGV. The *dharmakāya* is also a support (*āśraya*) for the other two bodies, which are also spoken of as resting on or grounded in the *dharmakāya* (*chos kyi sku la brten pa*).[2759] As in these other texts, buddhahood as realised in the *dharmakāya* is free of taints (**malavimukta*), free of the twofold obstacle, operates continuously (**asamucchinna*) and without effort (*anābhoga*).[2760] As in SdhN and MSA, at least, the *dharmakāya* is explicitly said not to be shared in common (*asādhāraṇa*) with Śrāvakas and Pratyekabuddhas, i.e. to be the special property that singles them out.[2761] As in RGV, the two palpable bodies are said to be "outflows" (**niṣyanda*) of the *dharmakāya*.[2762]

Thus, there are significant similarities in the overall orientation of MSg towards *trikāya* doctrine. Setting aside for our present purposes numerous differences in detail that could be observed, it is all the more significant to observe that there is at least one basic difference in emphasis between the *trikāya* doctrine of MSg and RGV, in particular. This difference has a number of dimensions.

First, we see a divergence in the understanding of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* itself. In RGV (and MSA, for that matter), *āśrayaparāvṛtti* is identified with *tathatāviśuddhi.* In MSg, the *āśraya* is by contrast identified with a Janus-faced *paratantrasvabhāva,* and *āśrayaparāvṛtti* is identified in the text

[2758] 10.4, Lamotte I, 85, II, 275.

[2759] 10.1, Lamotte I, 83, II, 266-267; 10.6, I, 86, II, 281;10.39, I, 98, II, 340. . Notably, the *dharmakāya* is also said to be the support for various Buddha-residences (*buddhavihāra*), I, 86, II, 279-281.

[2760] 10.29, Lamotte I, 93, II, 315-316.

[2761] 10.32, Lamotte, I, 95, II, 325-326.

[2762] 10.37, Lamotte I, 98, II, 339-340.

with the purification of that *āśraya* of its impure aspect, viz. *parikalpitasvabhāva*.[2763] The identification of *paratantrasvabhāva* as the *āśraya* suggests (like MSg's version of *trisvabhāva* theory as a whole) a determination to walk an exact knife-edge between transcendence and immanence, that gives equal weight to the completely supramundane status of the absolute and to its full interpenetration with the mundane. This determined maintenance of an exact balance between transcendent and mundane is further reflected in the doctrine of *trikāya* in MSg, in the fact that one of the core features of the *dharmakāya,* viz. (that which is defined by) *āśrayaparāvṛtti,*[2764] is non-duality in a number of respects, including the non-dualism of existence and inexistence, being conditioned or unconditioned, and unity or multiplicity.[2765] It is also connected in turn to the text's overt insistence on a fuller immanence, in the guise of "non-abiding Nirvāṇa" (*apratiṣṭhitanirvāṇa*),[2766] a notion that insists at every turn on the full equivalence of *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa* and the Buddha's non-dual and equal participation in each. Finally, it is reflected again in the text's explicit insistence, echoing SdhN, on the Prajñāpāramitā-like position on the basic question of docetism that the Buddhas are have in fact "neither entered completely into *parinirvāṇa* (*atyantaparinirvṛta*)*,* nor not entered completely into *parinirvāṇa*".[2767]

In all of these respects, I suggest, the *trikāya* doctrine of MSg presents itself as a determined counterweight to the quite strong emphasis on the ultimate transcendence of buddhahood of

[2763] See §5.2.13.

[2764] 10.3, Lamotte I, 84, II, 268.

[2765] 10.3, I, 84-85, II, 271-272.

[2766] Identified as identical with abandonment as the fruit of practice, and having in its turn *āśrayaparāvṛtti* as its defining characteristic; 9.1, Lamotte I, 81, II, 259.

[2767] *chos kyi skur gtan du yongs su mya ngan las 'da' ba yang ma yi n/ gtan du yongs su mya ngan las 'da' ba ma yin pa yang ma yin pa,* 10.34, Lamotte I, 96, II, 329.

RGV. It puts up a determined resistance to the relatively clear-cut docetism that seems to be the natural corollary of a swing so far towards the pole of transcendence. In this, it seems to me, MSg harks back to the proto-*trikāya* position of SdhN, where we saw a similar attempt to strike a balance between the supremacy of the *dharmakāya,* the transcendence of the Buddha as embodied in it, etc., on the one hand; and a robust reality to his visible embodiment, on the other. There, too, we recall, that balance was expressed in a non-dualist rhetoric that echoed Prajñāpāramitā dialectics.[2768]

I emphasise that in presenting my analysis of MSg's *trikāya* doctrine in terms of its relation to RGV, I characterise it, for example, as like "a reaction to" RGV, or "harking back" to SdhN, only as a manner of speaking. I do not wish to appear as if I am trying to reconstruct any actual historical relations or patterns of influence between MSg and any of these other texts. Rather, my main point here is to demonstrate that the increasing docetisation we traced from SdhN to RGV is certainly *not* the trace of some inexorable steamroller of doctrinal "progress". Nor has RGV "actually" drawn out "the" sole correct interpretation of MSA on these points, so that we can subsume the interpretation of one text to the other. The most important lesson of this brief comparison to MSg is that even in the two texts that represent the most proximate points of interpretation to MSA itself, and therefore to the scene of origin of *trikāya* (so far as we know), there is rather already a significant discrepancy in interpretation.

[2768] There may be something in the air of apparent conservatism we thus detect in these two texts. By comparison to RGV, they both seem less willing to throw over the old doctrinal categories in favour of a conceptual machinery elaborated *tout de nouveau,* and to be more interested in valuing and retaining the old categories and artfully weaving them into a synthesis with the new. See, as an example of this tendency, the long list of "associated qualities" of the *dharmakāya,* a list that looks a lot like the old one of Mokṣala's *Pañca* (see p. 791 above) and reads like an attempt to include all previous conceptions of the *dharmakāya* while demoting them to the status of ancillaries to its essence. This list includes the six *abhijñā,* the eight liberations (*vimokṣa*), the four bases of mindfulness, the thirty-two major and eighty minor marks, the eighteen *āveṇikadharmas* both in several separate subcategories and also considered as a unit, and omniscience itself; MSg 10.9-28, Lamotte I, 87-90, II, 285-306.

This discrepancy, moreover, falls out precisely around the issue I have already identified above as one of the central tensions driving and riving the discourse of embodiments in Buddhism as a whole – the "antinomy of immanence". This antinomy is here manifested as the problem of exactly where the line falls between the Buddha's genuine and intrinsic embodiment (or being) for his own sake, and mere docetistic manifestations with no substantial reality for the sake of other beings. I have therefore engaged in this short foray into the divergent interpretation of *trikāya* in MSg in an effort to undermine from another direction the teleological fallacy that sees in *trikāya* the triumphal grand resolution of all problems and dissonances in the problem of the Buddha's embodiments. Once more, as in the unresolved problems we traced in the opposition between "for the sake of the Buddha himself" and "for the sake of others" within MSA and RGV themselves, we see that as close as we can get to the origin point of *trikāya* doctrine, it rather already betrays signs of this fundamental inner tension. I will suggest below that this tension continued to drive further innovation and speculation as much after the advent of *trikāya* doctrine as before.

5.3.8 Conclusions

In this section of this dissertation, I have attempted to tease out connections and patterns running through the larger context and system comprised by a core handful of early texts connected to the elaboration of *trikāya* doctrine, rather than treating the question only through the study of the scant evidence afforded by the first occurrence of those concepts in MSA on its own. In so doing, I have attempted two interrelated tasks, one backward-looking, and one forward-looking.

Retrospectively, I have attempted to find and elucidate connections between *trikāya* doctrine and immediately preceding developments in the history of embodiment doctrine. I have

focused not, as previous studies have done, on antecedents to the notion of this or that "body" in isolation, but rather, on possible connections to the two most salient developments of Buddha-body doctrine, aside from *trikāya* itself, in the remarkable ferment in embodiment doctrine that runs through the third and fourth centuries: the idea of that the Buddha is actually immortal, sometimes expressed in the related idea that he is embodied in adamant; and the doctrine of *āśrayaparāvṛtti,* which I have argued in an earlier section of this chapter represents at its base a doctrine (or constellation of related doctrines) about (the) bodily transformation(s) that attend the realisation of full awakening to absolute truth.

I have argued that *trikāya* doctrine is indeed connected to both of these other developments. The connections between *trikāya* and the actual immortality of the Buddha are fairly simple, and their extent is delimited by scattered references to the actual eternity of the Buddha in the course of the exposition of the problematic of embodiment in the texts that have concerned us here. The connections between *trikāya* and *āśrayaparāvṛtti,* however, are more complex and profound. I have traced parts of this pattern throughout the preceding analysis, but it will be an central task of this conclusion to return to this question, and to argue that, taken in their totality, the various pieces of evidence for this connection suggest that it is fundamental to the very intent and historical significance of *trikāya* doctrine itself.[2769]

Prospectively, as it were, my main intention has been to cut off at the pass the teleological reading of *trikāya* as the "consummation" or the end of interesting development in the history of ideas about the embodiments of the Buddha. This goal has been well served, I believe, by

[2769] John Makransky before me has also emphasised the close connection between *āśrayaparāvṛtti* and esp. *svābhāvikakāya* as it enters into the *trikāya* model; see esp. *Buddhahood Embodied* 80,83, and the lengthy discussion in his §4.6, 62-72 (which, however, is possibly partly anachronistic; see n. 2599 above). However, once he brings *āśrayaparāvṛtti* into the discussion, Makransky focuses almost entirely on *svābhāvikakāya.* He makes no special connection between *āśrayaparāvṛtti* and the other two members of the *trikāya* rubric.

broadening our purview a little beyond MSA itself, and avoiding the assumption that there is a single orthodox understanding of *trikāya* even at its inception. We have seen that even very close to its scene of origin, in the two next-most proximate contexts represented by RGV and MSg, there are already signs that not all business is finished by the advent of *trikāya*. The significant textual problem around the question of which bodies are for "the Buddha's own sake" and "for the sake of others" respectively already seems to suggest that a key tension between genuine embodiment and genuine transcendence is felt at the heart of MSA itself.

RGV already feels the need to complicate things by introducing the further complexity of the twofold opposition of *vimuktikāya* and *dharmakāya,* which I have argued is in part an attempt to come to grips with the vexed question of where the line can be drawn in the sand between the Buddha's most veritable embodiment and the docetistic bodies he displays only to save sentient beings. RGV further seems to shift in the direction of a more thorough docetisation of the doctrine, perhaps by comparison to MSA but certainly against more distant antecedents in SdhN. MSg, however, seems to tend if anything in the opposite direction from RGV, towards the kind of principled non-dualistic approach to docetic bodies exhibited before it by SdhN.   These various developments between them all suggest that there was no stable position on these questions, but that from the outset they were destined to be the objects of continued contention.

In a short postscript to the present chapter (Ch. 5.4) I will further briefly point to a number of developments in the post-history of models of multiple embodiments for the Buddha that bear out these intimations of disquiet, and show empirically that the *trikāya* synthesis was neither universally accepted nor imperturbably stable.

In the remainder of this concluding section of my discussion of *trikāya*, I will first summarise briefly some significant but minor and relatively incidental theses that have emerged from the above discussion. I will then return to the question of the conceptual and possibly historical relations between *āśrayaparāvṛtti* and *trikāya*. Finally, I will remind readers that in the course of our analysis here, we have touched upon a few of the largest themes that will emerge from consideration of the history of doctrines of embodiments taken as the topic of this study as a whole, and we will cast our glance forward in brief anticipation of some of its most general conclusions.

One significant finding of the study presented here has been that following the clue provided by the opposition between *vimuktikāya* and *dharmakāya,* it proved possible not only to identify a thread of connection between RGV 2 and SdhN, but also, perhaps more significantly, common features in the treatment of the broad theme of embodiment between SdhN and MSA. This has suggested that the idiosyncratic embodiment doctrine of SdhN 10 may be a close antecedent to the full-fledged *trikāya* doctrine as it emerges in MSA. Indeed, considered in terms of some basic facts about the texts and doctrinal context concerned, this seems on reflection quite plausible. *Trikāya* is not found in the *Yogācārabhūmi* (YBh). Apart from YBh, SdhN is one of the earliest Yogācāra texts. As a quite highly systematised and philosophically sophisticated text, it is quite a likely candidate for the role of model to important early Yogācāra *śāstras* that slightly post-dated it.

A second finding has been the hints that at least one line of development in embodiment doctrine through this early period pursued an ongoing process of increasing docetisation. It is especially apt, I believe, that we find a strong expression of this tendency in RGV, that is, in a Tathāgatagarbha context. This suggests that the Tathāgatagarbha context itself merely

represents, in some senses, the most emphatically gnostic-docetistic-transcendent pole of a spectrum of positions that were adopted in the Mahāyāna as a whole in this period, with regard to the relative nature and reality of the "absolute" and the mundane vis-à-vis one another.

Against RGV so understood, MSg appears much better aligned with the earlier model of SdhN, that is, to place a firmer emphasis on the due consideration that must be given to the aspects of the mundane as having their own serious reality. In the case of embodiment doctrine, this comes out as an apparent will to regard even the Buddha's docetistic manifestations as not simply or entirely unreal. We can easily imagine that this may be attributable to a fear that embodiments that are too unreal will quickly evanesce into utter inefficaciousness. There is a much broader pattern here, however, of which two other important representative expressions in the MSg line are (1) the will to give due weight to illusion and the relative world of suffering in (the Mahāyāna approximations of) "metaphysics/ontology";[2770] (2) the place given to the Janus-faced *paratantra-svabhāva* in the *trisvabhāva* theory of this line.

Against these two poles, it seems, we must regard MSA as occupying a kind of middle ground, at least in sufficient degree that it was amenable to almost equal use by each of the two texts. However, we should note that clues in MSA of leanings towards quasi-Tathāgatagarbha ideas (passages we already examined above that come close to positing an original buddhahood; *prabhāsvaracitta* as an aspect or feature of the "absolute", etc.) show clearly that this is a more complex matter than the simple differences between "Tathāgatagarbha" and "Yogācāra" shown us by the sketch-maps of doxography. It seems a more plausible reading of the distribution of ideas in these texts to say, rather, that even within Yogācāra itself, different authors or texts grappled with the unpalatable tradeoff between the true transcendence of the Buddha and his

[2770] Cf. e.g. *abhūtaparikalpo 'sti,* "there *is* such a thing as the unreal constructions of imagination", in the words of *Madhyântavibhāga* 1.1.

true availability to sentient beings in the world, and there were several different sets of terms in which this deal with the devil might be struck.

The comparison between RGV and MSg in this regard thus makes it clear that the difference between SdhN and RGV is not a mere matter of chronology. That is, we cannot simply imagine that the increased docetisation we see in RGV is a direct reflection of an ongoing process across of increased docetisation across the board. With this proviso in mind, however, it remains true that at least so far as ordinary denizens of this Sahā world are concerned, *trikāya* doctrine posits only an access to an illusory form of the Buddha emanated by magical power (*nairmāṇikakāya*). In this degree at least, *trikāya* represents a relative entrenchment and normativisation of docetistic Buddhalogy. We might thus take it to mark a passing high tide in strong transcendence, a tide that had perhaps been building as far back as the earliest Mahāyāna texts we have been able to examine.[2771]

One of my major theses in this section of this dissertation has been that *trikāya* theory is best understood as a continuation of *āśrayaparāvṛtti,* certainly conceptually, but also perhaps historically. Due to the failure to regard *āśrayaparāvṛtti* in its proper light as a doctrine of embodiment, combined with the trick of hindsight that made *trikāya* appear as the inevitable teleological destiny of embodiment doctrine and therefore to require no further explanation, secondary scholarship has missed this key connection in the history of Buddhist ideas about embodiment. I believe, however, that we have seen ample reasons in the course of the analysis

[2771] In suggestions for future research in my General Conclusion, I will suggest that the flow and ebb of this tide did not stand transfixed before the Canute of *trikāya* theory, but continued to heave and swell. One swing towards the opposite pole, that is, a low tide of strong transcendence and a high tide of robust, in-your-face immanence, might be represented by the twin prongs of flesh-and-blood embodiment of buddhahood in later Chan and Tantra. See §6.2.13.

above to regard this connection as one of the most significant most proximate factors leading to the emergence of this key doctrine.

We saw first, in §5.3.3, that wherever *trikāya* is introduced in the texts we studied here, *āśrayaparāvṛtti* and related ideas like the "purification of Thusness/the *dharmadhātu*" etc. are a key part of the doctrinal setting, and one of the key categories under analysis. We also saw further, in §5.3.5, that MSA 9.12-17 provide strong grounds for suspecting that there is a terminological connection between the sixth category of "manifestation" (*vṛtti*), under the auspices of which *trikāya* is elaborated, and *āśrayaparāvṛtti*. If we follow up the hint thus provided by MSA 9.12-17, it seems that the text is engaging in no idle wordplay here, but rather showing us a connection that goes beyond terminology to deeper issues.

In the context of the RGV 2 category of "function" (*karman*), the dualism of *vimuktikāya-dharmakāya,* and especially the latter, is understood to label a twofold basis or ground for the working of buddhahood in the world for the sake of both the Buddha himself and others (*svaparârtha*).[2772] This same twofold ground is also held by both root verses and commentary in RGV to ground or cause a transformed function of the (objects of the) six sense organs (§5.3.6.8). The detailed description of the operation of these six extraordinary objects of the sense organs can be most plausibly interpreted as being "for the sake of others", and is therefore congruent with the "manifestation" of *trikāya* and especially the latter two visible bodies. In both these respects, RGV consistently understands (1) that *āśrayaparāvṛtti* results in the attainment of the twofold ground, with emphasis (in the perspective of "attainment", vs. what is aboriginal and therefore need not be attained) on the *dharmakāya*; (2) that this twofold ground is in turn the

[2772] See p. 1267, and also the passage cited at n. 2685 and again at n. 2731; implicit in the notion of "subsequent" (*tadūrdhvam*), passage cited at n. 2683.

"support" or "basis" (*āśraya*) for function or manifestation, variously conceived, which directly or mediately ends up working for "the sake of other" beings.

The implication is clearly that *āśrayaparāvṛtti,* or the "transformation of the *āśraya*", produces not only a radically new *āśraya* for the Buddha "for his own sake", but also a radically new *āśraya* that in another aspect or dimension grounds radical new manifestations in the world "for the sake of others". In short, *āśrayaparā<u>vṛtti</u>* leads ultimately not only to the acquisition of the *dharmakāya,* but to the further <u>*vṛtti*</u> of the *sāṃbhogikakāya* and *nairmāṇikakāya*. This interpretation is clearly related to a notion that we observed at work in the texts, that the *dharmakāya* is the "basis" (various Skt. terms) of the other two bodies in the *trikāya* triad.[2773]

We also saw, in §5.3.6.4, that many of the most important features of these relations between *āśrayaparāvṛtti,* the *dharmakāya,* and the Buddha's embodiment for/and teaching can be seen as implicitly obtaining for (or at least not demonstrably inconsistent with) the presentation of SdhN 10. These features include the striking reference back to *āśrayaparāvṛtti* in baldly corporeal terms (*lus*, not [e.g. *chos kyi*] *sku*) at 10.8. *Dharmakāya* is understood with primary reference to the Buddha's visible appearance in the world (by *nirmāṇa*) and the teaching, and this understanding is set about by two references to *āśrayaparāvṛtti* = the attainment of the *dharmakāya.* This gave us a valuable clue to the sense in which *dharmakāya,* or the twofold ground as a whole, is thought to ground manifestation for the sake of sentient beings in RGV also. This clue was corroborated by passages from RGV 1 (§5.3.6.5, §5.3.6.6) and the RGVV prose introduction to the "function" section at 2.18. In sum: (1) the *dharmakāya* here grounds in particular a twofold function of display in visible bodies and teaching, exactly as the RGVV introduction to 2.18 says; (2) as SdhN puts it, this is what is special about the *āśrayaparāvṛtti* of

[2773] See p. 1210 for MSA; 1211 for RGV.

the Buddha – that it leads to this further *vṛtti,* and is not like the barren (for other beings) *āśrayaparāvṛtti* of Śrāvakas and Pratyekabuddhas.[2774]

Thus, in sum, *trikāya* theory asks, "What next?" and, "What is special about the *āśrayaparāvṛtti* of a Buddha?" The answer is that a Buddha's *āśrayaparāvṛtti* leads to a further *vṛtti*, in which the threefold body springs into action for the benefit of other sentient beings.

In closing, I must point out that I do not hold that this link to *āśrayaparāvṛtti* explains everything about *trikāya* theory. It is possible that the connection between *āśrayaparāvṛtti* and *trikāya* is not only conceptual but historical. However, another major impetus at work in the elaboration of *trikāya* doctrine has been consistently identified in previous scholarship on the bodies of the Buddha: the urge to synthesise some of the various notions of the Buddha's embodiments that had emerged in the period leading up to *trikāya* into some kind of coherent overall framework.[2775] Other factors may also have been at work. The analysis I have presented here is meant to elucidate only one hitherto neglected dimension of the significance of *trikāya.*

[2774] Though it embodies their liberation (*vimuktikāya*), this embodiment "gives off no light". See SdhN 10.10. Those embodiments are like ordinary gems and crystals, which do not emit light, but the *dharmakāya* is like the "water-crystals and fire-crystals of the orbs of the moon and sun", which give off great light; Lamotte 163, 268-269, Powers 305.

[2775] If the Buddha is one, then his various embodiments must exist in some coherent relation to one another. Thus, it is certainly true, as scholarship to date has emphasised to a fault, that *trikāya* doctrine attempts to make coherent sense, in a single system, of the docetistic body or bodies of the Buddhas of this Sahā world through the course of their stereotyped careers, in the *nairmāṇikakāya;* of the bodies of celestial Buddhas in cosmically remote buddha-lands, in the *sāṃbhogikakāya*; and of the doctrine of the Buddha's embodiment in the Mahāyāna "absolute", in the *svābhāvikakāya/dharmakāya.* Indeed, it is also true, if we reach back further, that it also binds up into its synthesis significant dimensions of even earlier notions of embodiment, including particularly the *manomayakāya* (which, while it is usually related to the *nairmāṇikakāya,* has dimensions which resonate also with the *sāṃbhogikakāya,* particularly its initial affinity with elevated heavens); and the body of marks, which ends up being incorporated into the *sāṃbhogikakāya* (though, once again, all is not entirely unambiguous, and the marks are also sometimes included among the marks that are analysed as the qualities of the *dharmakāya* even within the framework of *trikāya* theory).

Chapter 5.4: Postscript to Chapter 5: Against the teleological reading of *trikāya* as the last word in body doctrine, and towards a post-history of multiple embodiments of the Buddha

Before we turn to the conclusion of this Chapter 5 as a whole, we will briefly consider, in this postscript to the chapter, a range of piecemeal empirical evidence to further undermine the teleological notion that *trikāya* somehow represented the final word in the history of Buddha-body doctrine, or a stable and adequate synthesis of the various notions that preceded it.

This evidence is presented as a part of a broader attempt in this dissertation to show, as much as the scope of this project will allow, that there are many further developments in the history of the problematic in Buddhism after the fifth century. Two other places in this dissertation where I have tried to convey how much work remains to be done on later history are: (1) the discussion of relics as embodiments of the Buddha in §4.1.1; and (2) brief comments on the problematic of embodiment in Chan and Tantrism as a direction for future research (§6.2.13). The comments here are thus to be read in tandem with those other comments if they are to be taken in their full force, and also in combination with my attempts to show, in §5.3.6.2 and §5.3.6.7, that *trikāya* doctrine is also riven by significant internal tensions even from the very scene of its elaboration.

It is very striking that scholars have identified a number of moments in later history where Buddhist authors and thinkers elaborated schema with four or more bodies. However, scholars usually treat these "three-plus" body doctrines as passing aberrations, and as an exception to the state of conceptual equilibrium that the *trikāya* model supposedly achieved. Yet, while each instance might look like a mere glitch if taken in isolation against the background of a supposed *trikāya* "orthodoxy", it surely becomes clear that a significant pattern runs through multiple instances when we consider them together.

John Makransky, for instance, writes an entire book to show that the *Abhisamayâlaṃkāra* (AA), which has typically been regarded as the *locus classicus* of an aberrant four-body doctrine, is in fact more correctly to be interpreted with Ārya Vimuktisena as preaching three bodies. We might interpret this analysis as affirming the place of *trikāya* doctrine as Mahāyāna orthodoxy. However, another, perhaps unintentional lesson of the story is just how attractive a four-body model seems to have been to a whole line of Buddhist luminaries, beginning with the "brilliant" Haribhadra himself,[2776] and including Prajñākaramati, Buddhaśrijñāna, Kumāraśrībhadra and Tsong kha pa. Indeed, as Makransky tells us, "Tibetan Sa skya and dGe lugs scholars of the present day continue to disagree on the issue".[2777] If the most learned minds in the tradition could not agree for over a millennium, then surely there must be more to the four-body theory than meets the eye.

Moreover, when we broaden our view, it turns out that Haribhadra and his successors are not the only place that "three-plus" theories of Buddha bodies crop up in the traditions. To raise just some examples, most of them already mentioned here and there in the secondary literature, and especially in the rich sources collected by Demiéville in the compass of his brief article "Busshin":

(1) The *Ratnagotravibhāga* I.145, as noted briefly by Demiéville[2778] and as we saw above, already explains that there are two "kinds" of *dharmakāya* (二種 in the Chinese translation), or that the *dharmakāya* is "twofold" (in Skt: *dvidhā*). These two kinds of

[2776] Makransky, *Buddhahood Embodied* 40.

[2777] Makransky, *Buddhahood Embodied* 6.

[2778] Seemingly alone among all the secondary scholars; Demiéville, "Busshin" 182.

dharmakāya are clearly related to different possible interpretations of *dharma,* one in which it is understood to stand for the *dharmadhātu* (cf. the *dharmatā* of the Prajñāpāramitā literature), and another in which it is understood to stand for the *deśanā-dharma* or "*dharma* as in the Teaching".[2779] The importance of this passage, I believe, cannot be exaggerated. The RGV, especially its root verses, may be nearly as early as the *Madhyântavibhāga* itself. The Chinese translation is an early version of the text. The presence of this (even proto-) doctrine of a split in the *dharmakāya* here suggests that the supposed "resolution" of the problem of the bodies of the Buddha began to show strain almost as soon as it had been elaborated.

(2) The *Pusa yingluo benye jing* 菩薩瓔珞本業經 (also very early!) divides the *dharmakāya* into two, namely a *dharmakāya* "of own-nature" 法性身 (**dharmatākāya*) and a *dharmakāya* "transformed" 應化法身.[2780]

(3) According to la Vallée Poussin, the *Pusa yingluo jing* (菩薩瓔珞經, T656) "names four bodies, which [in fact] come to five": *svābhāvika, sāmbhogika* (doubled into *sva*[-*artha*] and *para*[-*artha*]), *nirmāṇa* and *niṣyanda*.[2781]

(4) Bandhuprabhā, in the *Buddhabhūmisūtraśāstra* (佛地經論 T1530), "expressly" divides the *sāṃbhogikakāya* into two, namely, for self and for others. This leads to some

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[2779] Johnston, RGV 70, Takasaki, *Study* 284-285, T1611.838b13-25.

[2780] T1485.1015c20-21. This text is thought in the Chinese tradition to have been translated by Zhu Fonian (active ca. 399-416).

[2781] La Vallée Poussin, "Appendice" 802

hermeneutical gymnastics to reconcile the resulting model with the two bodies of birth (note!) and *dharma.*[2782]

(5) The chapter of the *Suvarṇaprabhāsôttaramāsūtra* on the bodies of the Buddha, which is found not in the Sanskrit but only in the Chinese versions of the *sūtra* (and the Tibetan translation from the Chinese of Yijing) states that the *dharmakāya* "combines the essence of *tathatā* for the advantage of the Buddha himself, and knowledge of *tathatā* for the benefit of others".[2783] This is not exactly a split, but I think it is easy to see that the logic mirrors the structure we see elsewhere explicitly articulated *as* a split into two different bodies. The *sūtra* then lays out a division of the bodies into four according to a kind of *catuṣkoṭi* logic, that is,

(i) a *nirmāṇakāya* which is not a "body of correspondence" (*yingshen* 應身);

(ii) a *yingshen* which is not a *nirmāṇakāya*;

(iii) a body which is both a *yingshen* and a *nirmāṇakāya*;

(iv) a body which is neither, namely the *dharmakāya.*[2784]

(6) The 金剛般若論 (**Vajracchedikāprajñāpāramitāśāstra*)[2785] speaks of two kinds of *dharmakāya,* a "*dharmakāya* of discourse" (言說法身, identified with the *sūtras*[2786]),

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[2782] Demiéville, "Busshin" 183, la Vallée Poussin "Appendice" 791; Nagao, "On the Theory" 42-43 and n. 25.

[2783] T664.363a4-13; Demiéville, "Busshin" 180.

[2784] Demiéville, "Busshin" 181; la Vallée Poussin, "Appendice" 789, 800. It is not entirely clear to me what la Vallée Poussin means when he mentions the tantalising idea of "un Dharmakāya de *li*", 789. As even this brief summary must suggest, this remarkable chapter in *Suv* is full of interest, not in the least for the analysis of Paramārtha's thought and his relation to his Chinese context. It drew the attention of Jingying Huiyuan in his *Dasheng yi zhang,* a fact which also does not escape the gimlet eye of Demiéville.

[2785] Attributed to Asaṇga, translated by Dharmagupta under the Sui.

[2786] Reminiscent of Lokakṣema's 法經身.

which is transcendent and yet is manifested in discourse, and a "*dharmakāya* of realisation" (證得法身), which is originally complete and yet is not realised except after practice, since it is initially obstructed by ignorance. The *dharmakāya* of realisation is in its own turn divided into two, one which is characterised by *jñāna* (智相), is omniscient, and teaches, and one which is characterised by merit, which receives the rewards of its good practices (福相).[2787]

(7) The *Dasheng bensheng xin di guan jing* 大乘本生心地觀經 teaches a *svābhāvikakāya,* a *sāṃbhogikakāya* for self, and a *sāṃbhogikakāya* for others.[2788]

(8) Jingying Huiyuan, in his *Dasheng yi zhang,* lays out a number of fourfold schemas.[2789] Huiyuan believes he observes such schemas in texts as diverse as the *Laṃkâvatārasūtra,* the *Śrīmālādevīsūtra,* the *Suvarṇaprabhāsasūtra,* etc.[2790]

(9) The **Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi* divides the *sāṃbhogikakāya* into two, i.e. "for one's own benefit" and "for the benefit of others".[2791]

[2787] Demiéville, "Busshin" 183, T1510.757b24 ff.

[2788] Demiéville, "Busshin" 181

[2789] T1851.841b20 ff., Nagao, "On the Theory" 42, n. 24.

[2790] The careful and even-handed attention Huiyuan pays to these theories is in stark contrast to the way modern scholars marginalise them, and suggests that allegiance to "historical" methods in scholarship may not always be a good thing!

[2791] Demiéville 175, 183; Nagao 43 and n. 25. Demiéville, oddly enough, dismisses this doctrine by saying it was an "innovation" which "reste confinée dans le domaine scolastique". It is difficult to imagine what point of contrast he is imagining here. Does he somehow think that e.g. MSA or RGV were *popular* texts?

(10) As late as the twelfth century, the Shingon 真言 school in Japan was split by a controversy over the question of in which of his bodies Vairocana preached the *Mahāvairocanasūtra.* In the course of this controversy, one of the positions elaborated envisaged, once more, a split in the *dharmakāya.*[2792]

These examples are surely not exhaustive, as they are based upon a very cursory sampling of the traditions, and limited almost entirely (with the exception of Item 10 on the list) to doctrines already pointed out in the secondary literature on Buddha bodies. They are also largely drawn from the East Asian traditions, though Indic items on the list include certainly RGV and Bandhuprabhā, and also, possibly, the authors of the **Vajracchedikāsūtraśāstra* and the *Pusa yingluo jing,* and sources for the doctrines described by Xuanzang in the **Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi.* We can add to this, of course, Haribhadra, along with the various figures identified above after Makransky who lined up on Haribhadra's side of controversy over the number of Buddha bodies in AA.

[2792] This development had its roots in attempts at reform by Kakuban Shōnin 覚鑁上人 (Kōgyō daishi 興教大師, 1095-1143). Kūkai's Shingon sect split into two factions after the thirteenth century as the result of this controversy. These sects were called the "Old Interpretation" (*koji* 古義) and "New Interpretation" (*shingi* 新義) schools. New School doctrine had its locus classicus in two commentarial works by Raiyu Sōjō 頼瑜僧正 (1226-1304): the *Shishinshō* 指心鈔 and the *Daiso gusō* 大疏愚草. The names of the two sects come from the doctrinal dispute between them on the matter of how exactly to conceive of the personage who preaches the *Mahāvairocana-sūtra* (MVS). This is the Vairocana Buddha, of course, but the question is which of his various bodies it is that preaches. In traditional interpretations, it was held that it is Vairocana's *svābhāvikadharmakāya* (Jpn. *jishōhosshin* 自性法身) that preaches the sutra. The New School interpretation agrees with this fundamental notion, but divides this body in turn into two further bodies, the *honjishin* 本地身 ("body of the fundamental stage", as if for Skt. **mūlabhūmikāya* or **mūlasthānakāya*) and the *kajishin* 加持身 (Ch. *jiachishen,* as if for Skt. **adhiṣṭhānakāya*). On this interpretation, the former, which is the fundamental, absolute aspect of the *svabhāvadharmakāya* (if such a locution is not simply redundant), cannot preach. Preaching is rather done by the *kajishin* or "*adhiṣṭhāna* body", which is the conditioned aspect of the *svābhāvikadharmakāya* (if this locution is not an oxymoron!). The basis of this controversy is a divergence in interpretations especially of the key opening line of MVS, 如是我聞。一時薄伽梵。住如來加持廣大金剛法界宮; T848.01a09-10, and particularly, whose *jiachi* it was that created the Palace within which the Buddha finds himself. Another way of understanding the question seems to be to ask whether the "Bhagavant" is identical with, and merely an epithet of, the "Tathāgata" in question, or whether there is not some substantive difference between the two. See Tajima, "A Study", esp. 231 ff.; Sakaki, "'Shishinshō' to 'Daiso gusō'".

In sum, these numerous examples suggest that time and again through Buddhist history, from almost the very moment that the *trikāya* doctrine was elaborated, various pressures drove the elaboration of models in which one or another of the "orthodox" three bodies was split again, or later thinkers saw the attractions of earlier positions that proposed such a split. These developments suggest that *trikāya* was anything but the last word in doctrines of the Buddha's bodies.

The various "three-plus" doctrines above seem to show that there were two main tensions that were papered over in the standard *trikāya* doctrine, which were expressed in various ways in doctrines of "extra" bodies. Moreover, it is very notable that the faultlines along which these tensions run have both already appeared in our consideration of the *trikāya* doctrine and related ideas in SdhN, MSA and RGV above. It is therefore possible, even in this brief sketch, to trace them right back to the very scene of elaboration of the attempted *trikāya* synthesis.

First, it seems that *trikāya* doctrine inherited, and did not address adequately (at least in the judgement of some stakeholders in the tradition), a partial tension between two compelling and powerful senses of the term *dharma.* The first sense of the word refers of course to "the" Dharma, that is, the teaching: the body of the Buddha's discourses, and the texts that contain those discourses and transmit them to the world through the ages. The other sense of *dharma* refers to the actual true state of affairs in the world, what actually "is" (in the attenuated sense all verbs of existence must assume in much Mahāyāna thought), "reality", "truth" in the objective sense, etc. This is *dharma* in the sense it assumes in *dharmadhātu, dharmatā,* and like terms. The dividing line between these two senses of the word *dharma* is seen in the overt or immanent fissures introduced into the *dharmakāya* in the examples above taken from the

Ratnagotravibhāga, the 金剛般若論 (**Vajracchedikāprajñāpāramitāśāstra*), and the late Japanese Shingon controversy.

The second, arguably more serious tension seems to persist and drive the elaboration of "three-plus" models of Buddha bodies. This tension lies between what we have seen above MSA and RGV call buddhahood "for its own sake" and "for the sake of others". This is obviously the most serious and repeated problem running through the above list of doctrines, and I will not belabour the point. We see this tension in the examples from the *Pusa yingluo benye jing,* Bandhuprabhā's *Buddhabhūmisūtraśāstra,* the *Dasheng bensheng xin di guan jing,* Paramārtha's *Suvarṇaprabhāsa* chapter, and **Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi.*

In addition to these two tensions, it seems to me that we should list a third tension: between the innate nature (*svabhāva*) of buddhahood and the *buddha-jñāna* that knows that nature in the fully awakened state. This tension only makes the briefest appearance in the list above, in the notion of Paramārtha's *Suvarṇaprabhāsa* chapter that holds that the *dharmakāya* "combines the essence of *tathatā* [for the advantage of the Buddha himself] and knowledge of *tathatā* [for the benefit of others]". The fact that this tension is combined here with the problematic of self-benefit vs. other-benefit should not obscure the fact that it is actually a separable issue. We see this same tension played out much more spectacularly in the most famous four-body doctrine of all, that found in Haribhadra's AA commentary. Here, the first two bodies are the *svābhāvikakāya* and the *jñānâtmaka-dharmakāya.*[2793] It seems clear that here, the strain runs

[2793] Makransky 218-223. Note that the idea of a *jñānâtmaka-dharmakāya* seems to reflect the idea of embodiment in gnosis which we have been able to trace back in this dissertation at least to the Lokakṣema version of *Aṣṭa,* where it appeared as the **sarvajñatâtmabhāva.* Haribhadra's four-body theory seems to be a clear indication that this idea of embodiment in gnosis, though it did not appear particularly prominently in the *trikāya* model, was certainly not yet a dead letter in Buddhist doctrinal history. It also seems a potentially significant fact that Haribhadra is working out of a broadly Prajñāpāramitā context.

along the faultline cleaving another vaunted nondualism, that between the "nondual" gnosis of the Buddha and its content or "object" (which is, of course, not an object, because it is nondual).

The evidence of doctrines like those listed above, I believe, is eloquent testimony that the *trikāya* doctrine did not consummate a perfect synthesis. Rather, the fact that things kept coming unstuck in the same places (i.e. along the lines of these three tensions) shows that the conceptual glue holding the components in this configuration in fact never entirely held. This makes something of a nonsense of the teleologically driven *trikāya*-centric framework that has governed study of the Buddha-bodies to date. Once that Procrustean bed has been broken open, we are at liberty to consider other large patterns that may run through the material – indeed, such reconsideration is incumbent upon us.

An immediate first step towards the identification of such patterns, I believe, is the observation that these tensions between (1) *dharma*-cum-truth vs. *dharma*-cum-discourse, (2) *svârtha* vs. *parârtha*, and (3) the essence of reality vs. the *jñāna* that knows it, are obviously not unrelated to one another. In all three cases, it seems to me, we are confronted with a single underlying tension between the "absolute" is it is in itself, that is, its intrinsic aspect, and that same "absolute" from some standpoint within radically conditioned ordinary experience, which must surely be considered an aspect of it that is extrinsic.

I think it is a perfectly serviceable tactic to refer to these two aspects of the "absolute" as the "transcendent" and the "immanent". *Dharma* as a discourse, for example, is in some sense accessible from within the round of ordinary *saṃsāric* experience in a way that *dharmatā* as the "absolute" nature of all things is not. We could thus say that it is immanent in *saṃsāra*, where *dharmatā* is transcendent. Similarly, if some facets of buddhahood and its fruits are available

for the enjoyment or experience only to the Buddha (*svârtha*), and yet others are also available to some sentient beings (however exalted) who themselves have not yet realised full buddhahood (*parârtha*), then intrinsic buddhahood as it is available only to the Buddhas entirely transcends the round of *saṃsāra* (conceived of as precisely *sattvaraśi, sattvadhātu*), whereas buddhahood as it is extrinsically or vicariously available to those sentient beings is in that degree immanent within it. Finally, though the tension is most implicit and therefore weakest here, the very notion of knowledge (by analogy to which we surely understand *jñāna* in our worldly approaches to it) implies intentionality or "aboutness", at least on our ordinary understandings. This in turn implies a certain difference and distance from the object of knowledge. Where the object of that knowledge is buddhahood and the knowledge is full *buddhajñāna,* the ghost of this understanding lingers, however much nonduality may be asserted. It thus appears that *buddhahood* as the "object" of knowledge is surely in some sense more sufficient in and of itself than *jñāna* "of" that "object", which, as intentional, seems somehow dependent and derivative. The margin of self-sufficiency that thus accrues to the "object" is precisely a margin by which it transcends the apparently derivative *jñāna.*

There is an analogy to the processes at work here, I believe, in the processes we observe through a series of ongoing fissions in models of multiple *vijñāna* in Yogācāra history. As is well-known, Abhidharma posits six *vijñāna,* one for each of the five physical senses, plus *manovijñāna*. Early Yogācāra doctrine seems to have added *ālayavijñāna* to this model in an attempt to resolve various doctrinal impasses, as has been so thoroughly shown by Schmithausen's brilliant study.[2794] The eventual orthodox Yogācāra model that is best known added (*kliṣṭa*)*manas* to these *vijñāna* to produce an eightfold model. It seems that (*kliṣṭa*)*manas* may have been a later addition; even a figure as late as Fashang 法上 (495-580) may have

[2794] Schmithausen, *Ālayavijñāna.*

known only seven kinds of "consciousness".[2795] Here, too, as with bodies, we can observe that the arrival at the orthodoxy that is sometimes presented as a teleological endpoint of doctrinal development did not, in fact, put a stop to innovation. Famously, some of Paramārtha's texts include the notion of *amalavijñāna,* which had a certain subsequent half-life in the East Asian traditions, and which as early as Tiantai Zhiyi 天台智顗 (538-397) was spoken of as the "ninth *vijñāna*" (*jiushi* 九識). Thus, as in the case of systematising models of multiple bodies, in these systematising models of multiple consciousnesses, we also repeatedly see splits take place. It is quite likely that these splits, too, recur along the fault lines defined by intractable underlying tensions.

Arguably, one of the key questions repeatedly at issue in these developments in Yogācāra models of consciousnesses was this: How do we account for the possibility that ordinary mind can be radically transformed into *buddhajñāna*?[2796] In other words, how do we account for the intrusion of the transcendent into the conditioned realm? If our basic model of sentient being is to be that of a mind, this question naturally translates into a more specific question: In what sense is it possible for the transcendent to be immanent within the mind of a sentient being?

In answer to this question, *ālayavijñāna* was posited as, among other things, a repository or even a seedbed that could accept germinal forms of the transcendent (conceived of in Chinese texts, at least, as "seeds of hearing", 聞薰習). These would flourish in the *ālayavijñāna* and eventually so pervade the whole system of sentience that they would produce a radical transmutation of its very substance (viz., precisely, *āśrayaparāvṛtti,* of course, understood on the

[2795] Gimello, "Chih-yen", 299.

[2796] Note that this question is in fact a quite precise mental counterpart to the corporeal question raised by *āśrayaparāvṛtti*; how is it possible for the embodiment of an ordinary sentient being to be radically transformed into the embodiment of a Buddha?

model of *ālayavijñāna* as *āśraya*). The difficulty was, of course, that the very same *ālayavijñāna* was conceived of as the repository of all the seeds of bad *karma* that kept the sentient being tied to *saṃsāra* in the first place. This coinherence in the same doctrinal and psychological instance of such radically opposed elements seems to have conditioned an intolerable conceptual tension. The first strategy was to split off the bad elements into a mental gulag of their own (*kliṣṭamanas*). At least one major thinker, however (Paramārtha) found this supposed solution insufficient, and tried the opposite tack of cordoning off the pure in its own special preserve (*amalavijñāna*).

I do not wish to suggest there is any close correlation between the proliferation of Buddha bodies and the proliferation of *vijñāna.*[2797] I would argue, however, that the same underlying tension between transcendence and immanence lies behind the more specific forms of the doctrinal problems at stake in both cases. In each case, the tension is so enduring and compelling precisely because each pole *must* be posited, and each in a strong form at that, in order for the doctrines to make religious sense. In order that there be hope of salvation for sentient beings in *saṃsāra,* it is necessary to subscribe to a state radically different from *saṃsāra,* that is, a state axiomatically transcendent in Buddhist terms. On the other hand, also in order for there to be a plausible prospect of salvation, it must be possible for beings within *saṃsāra* to have some point of access to that transcendent, however mediated. In other words, there is an equally urgent requirement to posit some immanence. This is what I have already called the "antinomy of immanence", a problem to which I will return in the General Conclusion to this dissertation.

[2797] However, the parallels we have observed, and the place of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* in both problematics, points in the direction of a sense in which the doctrines of embodiment we study here are a counterpart and mirror to various dimensions of Buddhist, and particularly Yogācāra, "philosophies of mind".

Returning, then, to doctrines of Buddha bodies, it seems clear, in light of these considerations, that *trikāya* doctrine can also ultimately be conceived of as an attempt to come to grips with this problem of immanence. It posits, in the *dharmakāya,* an absolutely transcendent form of embodiment for buddhahood. This transcendent buddhahood is necessary in order that buddhahood be sufficient in and of itself, that is, that it not be conditioned, dependent or grounded upon anything beyond itself. However, this transcendent *dharmakāya* is also strictly a closed book to sentient beings in *saṃsāra,* precisely in virtue of its perfect transcendence and transcendent perfection. The doctrine thus posits two further forms of embodiment, which are grounded upon (*āśrita*) *dharmakāya* and yet somehow distinct from it. These "embodiments" are the vessels of its immanence.

Of these two embodiments, the *nairmāṇikakāya* seems to have been less problematic, since it is held simply to be an illusion fabricated by the Buddha in his mercy for the edification of sentient beings. The *sāṃbhogikakāya,* however, at least on the evidence of the above unsystematic list of later splits in bodies, seems to have been particularly problematic. This is arguably because it is of its nature an embodiment particularly susceptible to the antinomy of immanence.

The very notion of *sāṃbhogikakāya* seems imply that the Buddha is genuinely *present* in this embodiment, and captured by it, in a way that is not the case with the *nairmāṇikakāya.* If the term means etymologically, as Makransky suggests, the body of *common* enjoyment, then this surely implies that the Buddha *himself* enjoys the ample fruits of his boundless merits in this embodiment along with his *bodhisattva* attendants. The Buddha, of his very nature, could surely not take any enjoyment from an illusion. Moreover, doctrine holds that *bodhisattvas* (at least the advanced ones) are capable of seeing things *as they truly are*, and this includes the Buddha.

Indeed, it is perhaps precisely this difference between them and ordinary sentient beings that mandates the need for a separate embodiment to appear among their congregations. *Bodhisattvas,* it seems, cannot be taken in by, or satisfied with, docetistic illusions.

But the *bodhisattva* is a Janus-faced being, with one face turned towards *nirvāṇa* and one face towards *saṃsāra*. In this mind boggling virtue of the *bodhisattva* ideal lies all its power and all its problems. Indeed, the *bodhisattva* ideal itself is surely just another expression of the same basic tension between transcendence and immanence,[2798] which is inscribed in the form of the antinomy of immanence at the heart of the single notion of immanence itself. Much more than *nairmāṇikakāya,* therefore (which is docetic and therefore not really of the world), or the *svābhāvikakāya* (which is radically beyond the world), the *sāṃbhogikakāya* is, of its very nature, the exact point of immanence, the hinge that joins the two realms of the "absolute" and *saṃsāra*.

It is no wonder, then, that in later doctrines of three-plus bodies, the *sāṃbhogikakāya* is exactly where the strain most commonly shows. In fact, the elaboration of *trikāya* theory boils down primarily to the elaboration of the *sāṃbhogikakāya* as the *tertium quid* between these to irreconcilable opposites. The teleological conceit that this doctrine provided a facile "solution" to the doctrinal problems that had driven the elaboration of body doctrine to that point seems at best naive. If it was the tension between transcendent and immanent dimensions of the "absolute" that impelled the elaboration of *trikāya* doctrine in the first place; and if there is a genuine antinomy inherent to the notion of immanence *per se;* then surely we would not expect any articulation of doctrine in human language to be capable of a such a "solution".

[2798] This would also seem to be true of *tathāgatagarbha, apratiṣṭhitanirvāṇa,* the conjunction of *nirvikalpakajñāna* and *tatpṛṣṭhalabdha,* and many other core Mahāyāna concepts.

In sum, then, I have shown here a sampling of later doctrines that suggest empirically that the *trikāya* doctrine was far from the last word in embodiment doctrine, even within the narrow frame defined by models of multiple Buddha-bodies. The tensions that seem repeatedly to be revealed by "splits" in the Buddha-bodies are the same tensions we already identified in Chapter 5.3 as present at the heart of *trikāya* doctrine even in the earliest set of texts to elaborate that doctrine. The distinction between "for the Buddha's own sake" and "for the sake of others" seems to have been particularly intractable. I have further argued that this specific tension, like other tensions sometimes observable in splits in models of multiple Buddha-bodies, is traceable to an underlying "antinomy of immanence". I take this antinomy to be one of the deepest underlying determinants and frames of reference for the meaning of Buddha-body doctrine and its history.

My purpose in presenting this evidence was to supplement evidence presented in Chapter 5.3 to counter the usual teleological notion that *trikāya* somehow resolved interesting problems and brought to an end interesting developments in the history of ideas about the Buddha's embodiments. The full thrust of this challenge to the usual teleological model will only be appreciated if the considerations I have presented here are taken in conjunction with the survey of problems in the dialectic of relics and other conceptions of the Buddha's embodiments in Chapter 4.1, and comments in the General Conclusion about Tantra and Chan (§6.2.13).

Chapter 5.5 Concluding observations

These conclusions to Chapter 5 occupy a peculiar position in the structure of the dissertation. They are sandwiched between a set of reasonably far-reaching conclusions about *trikāya* doctrine and its relation to various other ideas, and the final chapter of General Conclusions to the dissertation as a whole, on the other. For that reason, there is less to say here than has generally been the case in concluding sections of previous chapters. I do not want to repeat unduly summaries in sections surrounding this one, and I will therefore be brief.

This chapter has shown, I believe, that the fourth century was a time of quite intense and seminal foment in ideas about bodies in Buddhism. In the relatively narrow compass of approximately a century or so, at the most, we see the advent of or a huge increase in attention to at least four striking new sets of ideas about embodiments.

Three of these sets of ideas have been the topic of their own dedicated sections in the present chapter: the idea that the Buddha is actually immortal, the related docetistic interpretation of his *parinirvāṇa,* and the concept of the *vajrakāya* as the embodiment appropriate to that immortality (Ch. 5.1); a whole slew of various ideas about the revolutionary transformation in embodiment that attends enlightenment, gathered under the capacious head of *āśrayaparāvrtti* (Ch. 5.2); and an remarkable attempt at the systematisation of several major ideas of the Buddha's various embodiments in *trikāya* theory (Ch. 5.3)..

To these ideas, we can add a fourth set: the corporeal reinterpretation of the opposition between *nirvāṇa* "with/out a remainder of support". We have traced these ideas through several highlights in otherwise apparently mutually remote contexts, through several sections of this dissertation.

To recapitulate: In Chapter 3.4, we saw that the corporeal reading of this opposition was scarcely known in the Pāli canon, and attempted to trace what we could of the complex process by which these concepts began their tortuous development from a quite different original meaning to their eventual corporeal reinterpretation. In the latter part of that section, we briefly sketched a range of indications in Chinese material subsequent to the Pāli canon that showed that the old sense of the terms and the nascent corporeal reinterpretation continued side by side even well after the close of the Pāli-canonical period. It proved surprisingly difficult to find solid evidence of the corporeal reinterpretation before the fourth century. In §4.4.5, we turned to the examination of a remarkably detailed passage discussing the new corporeal interpretation in the Sarvâstivāda Abhidharma text the **Mahāvibhāṣā*. There, we saw that these concepts were suddenly portrayed as the subject of intense and complex controversy, intimately connected to other dimensions of the problematic of the Buddha's embodiment and even faint anticipations of *āśrayaparāvṛtti*. In §5.2.8, we returned to this question in the context of the discussion of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* itself. We saw that the apparently new (or at least, newly popular) corporeal interpretation of these concepts was related to the doctrine of *āśrayaparāvṛtti,* itself an important new development in ideas about embodiment in this period.

Thus, with the almost unique and puzzling exception of the instance of the corporeal interpretation at Iti 44 (also examined in Chapter 3.4), the overall pattern evinced by this evidence suggests that right down to the fourth century, the corporeal interpretation of these concepts was virtually unknown or probably unimportant. Thereafter, however, it seems that it rapidly gained in importance. This new importance seems to have centred on two key related contexts: the Sarvâstivāda Abhidharma and the early Yogācāra. It is thus another major doctrine that seems to have emerged in the period of remarkable creative ferment in ideas

about the Buddha's bodies in the fourth century, and adds to the overall impression of just how active that period was in this regard.

It is clear from this summary that these various developments were not entirely unrelated. I have already argued in the conclusions to Chapter 5.3 that there are close connections between *āśrayaparāvṛtti* and *trikāya,* in particular, and that links can be seen between *trikāya* and the idea of the Buddha's immortal embodiments. As I just mentioned, we also saw in §5.2.8 that *sôpadhiśeṣa-* and *nirupadhiśeṣanirvāṇadhātu* seem to have been brought quite early into a relation with *āśrayaparāvṛtti* in at least one seminal context.

Recognising these various connections, however, it also seems possible to observe that these various sets of ideas were not all interrelated with equal intimacy. This may be connected to the doctrinal contexts from which they respectively sprang. Most notably, it seems worth observing that three of these sets of ideas - *sôpadhiśeṣa-* and *nirupadhiśeṣanirvāṇadhātu, āśrayaparāvṛtti* and *trikāya* – all seem to have emerged from the same broad context, which we might call the "Sarvâstivāda-Yogācāra nexus". Ideas about the Buddha's immortal embodiments, by contrast, seem to have sprung up in a much broader range of texts, and perhaps primarily among the Mahāyāna *sūtra* literature.

This observation leads to further considerations. Why was the Yogācāra context, in particular, such a hotbed of these new concepts? Of course, it is possible that this was simply part of a broader pattern where Yogācāra was an especially active centre of conceptual innovation generally. However, we should also consider the possibility that there is a particular connection between the special doctrinal positions and interests of Yogācāra and implications for the doctrine of embodiment. Yogācāra thinkers may have therefore been especially

motivated to elaborated new conceptions of embodiment in this period. If we entertain this possibility for the sake of argument for a moment, it seems immediately possible to make a couple of observations.

First, all three of the new conceptions relating to embodiments that may have sprung up or attracted such heightened interest among the Yogācāra in this period are related via the central problematic of how embodiment is *transformed* by the realisation of enlightenment. That is to say, the problem is not just how the embodiment of the Buddha differs from that of a *pṛthagjana,* but how to get from A to B. It is possible that this pattern in ideas about embodiment is thus a part of a larger interest in Yogācāra in the problematic of a precise understanding of enlightenment as a process or a transformation, and the dynamics of that process.

Second, we might relate the renewed interest in the nature and problematic of embodiments to the significant shift that seems to have been taking place at the same time among the Yogācāra in views about the nature of human being and even reality. I am thinking, of course, of the famous Yogācāra shift to what we can roughly characterise as *vijñaptimātra*.[2799] We have already seen at least one direction in which this phenomenalist reformulation of the nature of the human being in the world had direct implications for notions of embodiment, in the rethinking of the *āśraya* or "ground" in terms not of the sixfold manifold of sense-organs, or even of Thusness, but of *ālayavijñāna* (§5.2.12). We might speculate, then, that in this fomentation of these major new understandings of the corporeal implications of enlightenment, we see a kind of Yogācāra "philosophy of the body" that is the slighted shadow to its more vaunted "philosophy of mind". If this suspicion proves accurate, the pursuit of its implications, both in

[2799] I.e. the view that ultimately all there is is a non-dual substrate of the contents of experience, which we erroneously construe in the dualistic terms of objects and subjects, things and persons, etc.

terms of our research directions among the texts, but also in terms of our overall understanding of Yogācāra as a system, could prove a rewarding agenda for future research.

The material gathered in this chapter, and particularly *trikāya* doctrine, appears in a different perspective when we recall the findings of Chapter 4, and particularly of Chapter 4.5 on the actual timing and context of the emergence of the concepts of *dharmakāya* and *rūpakāya.* Recall that the received understanding to date has been that these concepts are generally old. The *dharmakāya* has been understood to date back to the Pāli canon, and its opposition to the *rūpakāya* has been thought a pre-Mahāyāna product of the "schools". Against this understanding, I argued that the evidence of the Chinese canon suggests that there is little reason to think that either concept was current or significant before the turn of the third century C.E. In the Chinese record, we see the *dharmakāya* so-named emerge around the middle of that century, and *dharmakāya-rūpakāya* emerge much more strongly in the second half of that century.

When we combine these observations with the evidence of remarkable ferment in the fourth century that we have canvassed in the present chapter, the overall picture that emerges is quite different from that held in the received view. In effect, we must remember, the advent of *dharmakāya* so-named, and the apparently very nearly contemporaneously advent of the *rūpakāya* also, is not just the moment of origin of two terms or concepts in Buddhism, but the real beginning of *buddhakāya* discourse *per se.*[2800] According to all the signs, then, it seems that around the middle of the third century, the idea of talking with special names about special *kāya* of the Buddha emerges with a fanfare out of the various rumblings and rumours that have been heard for perhaps a century or more theretofore. Once this discourse hits the ground, it

[2800] We have of course traced various *precedents and foreshadowings* of that discourse in earlier sections of this dissertation.

spreads like wildfire. In the relatively short space of a century or so – a far more foreshortened timeframe than the traditional view would lead us to expect – we are taken from that point to *trikāya,* with immortality, the *vajrakāya, sôpadhiśeṣa-* and *nirupadhiśeṣanirvāṇadhātu, āśrayaparāvṛtti, trikāya* along the way, and most likely the ideas of the Sarvâstivādin Abhidharma thrown in for good measure.

CHAPTER SIX: GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

In these General Conclusions to this dissertation, I will address myself to three final tasks. First, I will offer an outline summary of the detailed history of ideas about embodiments studied in the body of this essay. Second, I will indicate the most notable of the many further avenues for future research I believe are opened up by the approach and findings of this dissertation. Finally, in a brief interpretative essay, I will gesture towards aspects of an interpretation of the meaning of this history, the conceptions of embodiment feature in it, and what it reveals to us about the underlying problematic of embodiment as a common human problem. This essay will be limited to sketchy gestures, however, for the simple reason that a full consideration of this aspect of the problem would certainly entail the writing of another dissertation-length project.

6.1 A tabulated summary of key developments in the history of ideas about embodiments in Buddhism from its origins to c. 400 C.E.

In the General Introduction to this dissertation, I already offered a summary of the principal theses of this dissertation (Ch. 1.2) and an outline of the structure of its argument (Ch. 1.4). Neither of these summaries, however, addressed itself precisely to the overall outline of the history studied here in its own right, and both omitted important components of that history. Such is the level of detail at which we engaged that history in the body of this dissertation, however, that there is a danger of missing the wood for the trees, especially where the treatment of developments that were in fact contemporaneous is scattered through separate parts of the dissertation in virtue of its expository structure. For the convenience of the reader, therefore, I here provide an outline of the significant landmarks in that history in table form.

As I already noted in more detail in the General Introduction (esp. Ch. 1.1), the narrative of this history presented here differs in most of its significant elements from the received view. I have also noted, however (esp. §1.3.5, §1.3.6, but also *infra*), that there are limitations to what it has been possible to do in the study of this history, and that I cannot, of course, claim absolute certainty for my findings. The narrative presented here should therefore be regarded as the best summary hypothesis (or set of hypotheses) I have been able to develop about the overall chronology of development in ideas about embodiments in Buddhism on the basis of the research presented here. I hope that this table presents that summary hypothesis in the clearest form possible, so that it is also clear exactly what kinds of evidence would be required to falsify that hypothesis or any of its component parts. In the interests of simulating further research that might correct any mistakes inherent in this hypothesis, I have tried here to be bold, and to err in the direction of being provocative.

I intend each box (row) on this table to encompass contemporaneous developments, and the order in which plural developments within a given period are presented has no particular significance. I provide in parentheses references to the chapters and sections of this dissertation in which individual developments are studied in detail, to facilitate the use of this table as a guide to those detailed studies.

PERIOD	DEVELOPMENTS
Earliest Pāli	Largely **negative evaluation of given embodiments**, physical (§2.1.1) and social (§2.1.2); Corresponding presentation of the religious ideal as "the undying" and Buddhist realisation as the **conquest of death** (Ch. 2.2); Practices aimed at an ideal of effective ***dis*embodiment** from embodiments both physical (§2.1.3) and social (§2.1.2). **"Body made of mind"** (*manomayakāya*) as the shared property of advanced meditators and cosmologically elevated beings; a necessary corporeal condition and stepping-stone to full spiritual/gnostic realisation in the DN 2 (*Sāmaññaphala-sutta)* "snake slough" model (Ch. 2.3); represents a possibility of "good", positive embodiment, though not specially of the Buddha and not yet ideal.
Later Pāli	The *bodhisattva* body bearing the **thirty-two marks of the "great man"** (*mahāpuruṣa*), a primarily physiognomic ideal of the *bodhisattva's* special body as emblematic of his immense merits; not yet quite an ideal body of the Buddha, but a further shift towards admission of "good" positive embodiments (Ch. 3.1). The **relic/*stūpa* cult** (certainly by this period; may be even earlier) certainly established in practice, though it is not yet clear what conception of the relics it entails (§4.1.2.1-§4.1.2.4). **Five pure aggregates** already a rubric used to epitomise the DN 2 (*Sāmaññaphala-sutta)* model of the path and the realisation that is its fruit (DN 10, *Subha-sutta* etc.; see p. 532). ***No dhammakāya*** yet (Ch. 3.2). **No *rūpakāya*** (§4.5.3, p. 987). ***Saupādisesa-* and *anupādisesa*** in this period **not yet** interpreted with reference to embodiment, with the notable exception of *Iti* 44 (Ch. 3.4). Voluntary **power over lifespan** ascribed to the Buddha; **long lifespans** of cosmically remote beings and Buddhas (§5.1.2).
Turn of Common Era (Kharoṣṭhī inscriptions)	**Five pure aggregates** animate relics in several inscriptions; Senavarma Inscription seems to speak of relics also as repositories of the Buddha's **awakening, *dharma* and *nirvāṇa***; relic is **undying** (*amṛta*); a "final body" (the identity of which is uncertain) is a "**mass of adamant**" (*vajrasaṃghana*) (§4.1.2.5). Thus, **relics as the first ideal and adequate embodiments of Buddhahood**, a conception emerging from *de facto* cultic practice (§4.1.4).
Earliest Chinese translations, esp. Lokakṣema	Prajñāpāramitā **polemics against relics** as the most veritable (i.e. productive of merit) embodiments of the Buddha (§4.3.2). Identity of buddhahood and the **Mahāyāna "absolute"**, i.e. the **nascent concept of *dharmakāya*** in all but name, clearly evidenced in a range of texts (§4.3.5, §4.3.7, §4.3.9-§4.3.10, §4.2.8).

Earliest Ch. (cont.)	The Buddha also understood to be most veritably **embodied in gnosis** (§4.3.2-§4.3.5). The **five pure aggregates** also spoken of as embodiments of the Buddha (§4.3.6). **Docetistic Buddhalogy** emerges as a probably **corollary of Mahāyāna "metaphysics"**, as seen in LAn (Ch. 4.2). Temporally and spatially remote **Buddhas ascribed with inordinately long life** and possible actual immortality (§5.1.3). The Buddha's embodiment described as **like adamant** in various senses, but not yet in the sense of being permanent or indestructible (§5.1.6). **Absolutely no interest** in the problem of embodiment in the earliest seven canonical Sarvâstivāda Abhidharma texts, at least some of which, working backwards from the **Mahāvibhāṣā,* we might ascribe approximately to this period, and which are certainly our best evidence for a supposed Sarvâstivāda "source" of Mahāyāna conceptions (§4.4.11).
Third century	***Dharmakāya,*** in various senses, first clearly **named as such** in the Chinese record in the *Vim* of Zhi Qian (§4.5.2), *Pañca* of Mokṣala (§4.3.11) and, copiously, in Dharmarakṣa (§4.5.3). ***Rūpakāya*** appears in the Chinese record: most frequently but not exclusively in opposition to *dharmakāya;* with an apparent emphasis on the Buddha as an object of *darśan*; with an apparent strong association to proto-*Avataṃsaka* contexts (§4.5.3, cf. §4.4.2). Emergence of overt discourse about named *dharmakāya* and *rūpakāya* represents the capping stone in the gradual emergence of **effabilism in ideas of embodiment**, and the **inception of *buddhakāya* discourse** proper. **Actual immortality** ascribed to Buddhas, in conjunction with the **docetistic interpretation of the *parinirvāṇa;*** in Dharmarakṣa's *Lotus,* these ideas applied to the **actually immortal Śākyamuni** (§5.1.3, §5.1.4). In Mokṣala, the earliest clearly datable **corporeal reading of *sa-* vs. *nirupadhiśeṣanirvāṇadhātu*** in the Chinese canon (cited fn. 919).
Fourth century[2801]	**Sarvâstivāda Abhidharma twofold model of *dharmakāya* vs. "body of birth"** most probably (? dating difficult) a creature of this period and a reaction to the Mahāyāna *dharmakāya-rūpakāya* model (Ch. 4.4, §4.5.4). Sarvâstivāda Abhidharma conception of ***dharmakāya* as *aśaikṣadharmas* = five pure aggregates** (§4.4.9); more generally, including the alternative

[2801] In the case of materials for the fourth century only, I have in part taken into account rough relative chronological precedence in deciding how to order developments in this table: thus, *āśrayaparāvṛtti* before *trikāya; āśrayaparāvṛtti* before SdhN; SdhN before *trikāya*; Sarvâstivāda (probably) before *vajrakāya*, etc.

Fourth century (cont.)	conception in terms of the **eighteen *āveṇikadharmas,*** the idea of ***dharmakāya* as embodiment in plural qualities** therefore most likely (?) datable to this period. The "revolutionary transformation of the basis" (***āśrayaparāvṛtti***) emerges as an attempt to think through the **process of transformation from ordinary given embodiment to the extraordinary ideal embodiment** of a liberated being (Ch. 5.2). SdhN idea of ***vimuktikāya-dharmakāya*** opposition in explaining the special *āśrayaparāvṛtti* of the Buddha (§5.3.6.4, §5.2.9). ***Trikāya*** emerges, later than *āśrayaparāvṛtti,* most probably as an **extension of *āśrayaparāvṛtti*** in two directions: to understand implications of liberation for embodiment subsequent to the actual moment of liberation; and to understand the unique aspects of the *āśrayaparāvṛtti* of the Buddha (Ch. 5.3). In sharp contrast to earlier periods, multiple attestations of the **corporeal reading of *sa-* vs. *nirupadhiśeṣanirvāṇadhātu*** in the Chinese canon (§3.4.6, §4.4.5) and in YBh (§5.2.8). **Actual immortality of the present Śākyamuni Buddha** copiously attested in multiple texts, as is his **embodiment in adamant (*vajrakāya*)** (§5.1.5, §5.1.7). New and quite widely distributed evidence in the Chinese canon of possibly **alchemical notions of aurifaction and immortality by elixirs,** which may relate to *vajrakāya* (Appendix 2). The weird and wonderful ideas about embodiments in the ***Mahāprajñāpāramitāśāstra*** most likely date roughly to this period (§6.2.5). Difficult to securely date **Mahāsāṃghika/Lokôttaravāda docetistic Buddhalogy** earlier than this period (§4.2.3-§4.2.6, §4.2.13).
Fifth century and later	early 5C (perhaps?): **MSg's** variant on *trikāya* (§5.3.7). c. 5C (perhaps) **RGVV**(*yākhyā*)'s attempt to synthesis MSA ***trikāya*** and SdhN ***vimuktikāya-dharmakāya*** opposition (§5.3.6). later developments in multiple bodies and repeated **splits of *trikāya*** (Ch. 5.4) Ongoing dialectic of conceptions of **relics and other Buddha-bodies** (§4.1.1) **Tantric and Chan** conceptions of an even more radical corporeal immanence of buddhahood (Ch. 6.3)

6.2 Avenues for future research

I hope that, in this dissertation, I have chosen to study some of the most representative and significant ideas in the early part of that history in my attempt to reorient our approach to the problematic of embodiment in Buddhism as a whole. Nonetheless, despite the length to which this dissertation has grown in the course of its study, the material studied here is surely only the tip of an iceberg, and the true dimensions of the problem remain unsounded and largely out of sight. In what follows, I will point in the direction of some of the avenues of further research whose study seems to me most pressing and most likely to yield further significant insights into the nature and history of this problematic.

First, even within the historical period to which I have largely limited myself here, there are a number of other significant bodies of material developments that I was unable to treat. It is entirely possible that careful consideration of doctrines of embodiments in one or more of these sets of materials would require the further revision of the conclusions and hypotheses at which I have arrived here.

6.2.1 Further study of ideas about embodiments in the earliest layer of the Chinese record, and the Lokakṣema corpus in particular

Little needs to be said about the importance of this topic and the potential it holds to yield further insights, other than to simply point to it as an important item on the agenda for future study. Already in this dissertation I have relied quite heavily upon the insights yielded by consideration of a number of different passages in several texts from this corpus – most particularly, of course, Lokakṣema's *Aṣṭa* and *Lokânuvartanā,* but also including other texts. The number of fresh insights provided by closer examination of this sampling of ideas about

embodiments suggests that there may still remain a good deal about the idea of embodiments in this literature that has not been noted or understood, particularly when that literature is examined without the blinkers of the excessive focus on bodies called *kāya* and *kāya* of the *buddha* only that has dominated the study of the question to date. A systematic study of this corpus, as a window to a richer characterisation of the overall landscape of ideas about embodiment at a seminal moment in our record, is therefore surely in order.

6.2.2 Proto-*Avataṃsaka* literature and the *Avataṃsaka-sūtra*

In §4.5.3, we saw that the texts of the proto-*Avataṃsaka* literature feature surprisingly prominently among the texts in which the first signs of the *dharmakāya-rūpakāya* opposition can be observed in the Chinese record – the opposition appears in such texts as the *Tathāgatôtpattisaṃbhavanirdeśa, Du shi pin jing* and the *Daśabhūmika.* This fact alone already raises the question of the role played by this proto-*Avataṃsaka* literature in the ongoing elaboration of new ideas about Buddha-bodies through the period studied here, and beyond. The *Avataṃsaka-sūtra* itself also list Buddha bodies in various systems of decades (in keeping with the decimal predilections of this literature as a whole), leading to a riotous variety of embodiments which, despite the valiant efforts of later synthesists like Fazang, for instance, do not obviously admit of simple subsumption to the categories of *trikāya.*[2802] These various clues suggest that (1) that doctrines of bodies in this literature, even within the period studied here, may not admit of simple subordination to the other ideas we have already examined; and (2) that this literature may have been another context in which first germinated ideas about embodiment that wound up being more broadly influential.

[2802] For a summary in English of some of the relevant ideas, including two separate decades of bodies and Fazang's "explanations", see Guang, *Concept of the Buddha,* 159-162.

6.2.3 *Tathāgatagarbha* literature

As the mention of the *Tathāgatôtpattisaṃbhavanirdeśa* in the previous paragraph suggests, there may have been connections between innovative doctrines of embodiment and nascent *tathāgatagarbha* doctrine quite early on. Another apparently early instance of the same literature (cited in the *Ratnagotravibhāga*), the *Anūnatvâpūrṇatvanirdeśa,* seems to echo a concept of "neither increase nor decrease" predicated of the body of the Tathāgata as early as the remarkable *Lokânuvartanā.*[2803] Already in the *Śrīmālādevī, tathāgatagarbha* is specifically identified with the *dharmakāya,*[2804] an idea that is taken up by RGV. This development surely prepared the ground for later synthesis between Yogācāra proper and the originally partially distinct Tathāgatagarbha strand. This suggests, on the one hand, that embodiment doctrine may have been an important medium for the achievement (or attempt) of that later synthesis, on the one hand, so that the study of embodiment doctrine in *tathāgatagarbha* contexts is an important element in the consideration of the grounds for it – a theme to which I will return, with regard to the sixth-century Chinese context and the work of Paramārtha in particular, immediately below. Second, however, it also raises the possibility that the *tathāgatagarbha* context may also have been another important seedbed for significant fresh ideas about embodiments through this period.

[2803] See n. 1452.

[2804] See most particularly 如是如來法身不離煩惱藏名如來藏, *ayam eva ca bhagavans tathāgatadharmakāyo 'vinirmuktakleśakośas tathāgatagarbhaḥ sûcyate,* Johnston 12, Takasaki 167-168: the *dharmakāya* of the Tathāgatas, when not (yet) freed from the encasing sheath of defilements, is referred to as *tathāgatagarbha.* Further on aspects of this association, see passages such as the following: 涅槃界者即是如來法身, T353.220c23, *nirvāṇadhātur iti bhagavan tathāagatadharmakāyasyaitad adhivacanam itîdaṃ*, Johnston 3. 無異如來無異法身。如來即法身, T353.220c42-25, *nânyo bhagavaṃs tathāgato 'nyo dharmakāyaḥ/ dharmakāya eva bhagavaṃs tathāgata iti,* Johnston 56. 於說如來藏[。]如來法身不思議佛境界及方便說。心得決定者 此則信解說二聖諦, 221b18-20.

6.2.4 Early "Theravāda"

My lack of expertise in Pāli language and Buddhism, and the logistical problems entailed by the scope to which this project had already grown, have prevented me from dealing in this dissertation with Pāli Buddhism beyond the closure of the Pāli canon. This is obviously a serious lacuna, and it is to be hoped very much that it will be filled. On the one hand, there is a clear potential for my conclusions and hypotheses here to be undermined by Pāli evidence. Conversely, if evidence cannot be found in the Pāli materials to challenge my provisional findings about the *dharmakāya-rūpakāya* opposition, in particular, it seems that these conclusions carry implications not entirely consonant with conventional understandings of the relation between Mahāyāna and post-canonical Pāli Buddhism (which I will here call "Theravāda" for convenience).

In Chapter 4.4 of this dissertation, I presented evidence from the Chinese canon that seems to show that the opposition between *dharmakāya* and *rūpakāya* was not known before approximately the third century, and further, that when it does first appear, contrary to received opinion, it does so in Mahāyāna contexts. Yet it is clear that this same opposition was standard, and important, for the later Theravāda tradition.[2805] This seems to present us with two clear alternatives. Either (1) the *dhammakāya-rūpakāya* opposition in Theravāda represents a significant Mahāyāna influence on the basic concepts of the tradition; or (2) if we can find clear evidence to show that the opposition is older in Theravāda than in any of the Chinese sources just mentioned, we must then reconfigure the theses of this dissertation to allow for a possible Theravāda origins of these concepts, and address ourselves to the processes and routes of influence by which these concepts found their way from Theravāda into the Mahāyāna.

[2805] See e.g. Reynolds, "Several Bodies". Note, however, that Reynolds seems to assume throughout this paper that the ideas he treats are domestic Pāli/Theravāda developments, traceable back in an unproblematic manner to the canon. I can see no grounds in the evidence he presents, however, for this confidence.

More generally, of course, the development of ideas about embodiments in para- and post-canonical Pāli materials is a large field of research, and one that I would suggest could profitably be re-examined in light both of the specific findings of this dissertation, and of the reconceptualisation of the problematic of embodiment and its significance I have presented here.

6.2.5 Ideas about embodiments in the **Mahāprajñāpāramitāśāstra* (MPPŚ)

In the course of this study, we have had incidental cause to note ideas about embodiments in the **Mahāprajñāpāramitāśāstra* on more than one occasion.

We saw that along with the **Mahāvibhāṣā,* which could be closely contemporaneous with it and stem from a related doctrinal context, it is the context in which the otherwise unusual concept of the "body born of father and mother" occurs most frequently.[2806] We also saw that it is a part of a nexus of early instances of the term "true body" (*zhenshen* 真身),[2807] whose later

[2806] See p. 870, p. 957.

[2807] This term itself may warrant further study in the East Asian tradition, as it seems to still be alive in contemporary belief and cultic practice. A recent internet news report claims that a monk named Wu Yunqing 吴云青 died in 1998 at the age of 160 years at Fozu si (佛祖寺, "Buddhas and Patriarchs Temple") in Guowangdu village 郭王度村 in the northern suburbs of Anyang County 安阳县, Henan, and that eight years later, his body has not yet decayed. The news report refers to Wu's miraculously preserved corpse as his "true body" (*zhenshen* 真身); at one point in the story, (sceptical) local peasants also use the term *roushen* 肉身. Anon., "160 sui gaoseng yuanji 8 nian zhenshen bu fu" 160 岁高僧圆寂 8 年真身不腐, http://www.chinawts.com/list/budnews1/195443785.htm, accessed April 2 2007, news report sourced attributed to *Henan Shangbao wang* 河南商报网. According to this story, which is full of echoes of some of the very old ideas studied in this dissertation, after Wang's death, his body was placed in meditation posture in a large urn (大圆缸), and ensconced in a small concrete tomb referred to in the news reports as a "four-storey (or six-storey) stone pagoda (四层/六层石塔) at Lingquan Temple 灵泉寺 at Ten Thousand Buddha Gully 万佛沟 in Shanying Township 善应镇 of the same Anyang County. The miraculous preservation of the body was confirmed by government workers three years (*sic*) after the death, in Dec 2000, at which time believers began referring to Wu as an "eminent monk" or "holy monk" (高僧, 神僧), the body was transferred to an expensive crystal casket for display, and possibly charging an admission price (reports conflict on this point). Wu's disciple Su Huaren 苏华仁 explained the remarkable preservation of his master's body by saying that because he had lived for over a hundred

vicissitudes Eugene Wang has pointed to but whose significance I argued he fundamentally misconstrues; and that it was connected, in the MPPŚ context, with a further unusual term from the root text, the **prakṛtyātmabhāva* or "aboriginal body" of the Buddha, translated suggestively into Chinese by Kumārajīva as the "eternal body" (*changshen* 常身).[2808] We also noted, in a different connection, that MPPŚ appears to posit extremely suggestive connections between relics and the *vajrakāya,* in a period when the notion of *vajrakāya* itself was rather freshly minted, as we saw in §5.1.7.[2809] We also saw that MPPŚ seems to contain an unusual theory of a threefold embodiment which differs from the eventually "standard" *trikāya*, almost exactly at the time when *trikāya* itself was being elaborated in the Yogācāra context: the embodiments at issue here are the "body born of father and mother"/"body of birth", sometimes opposed to *dharma*[*tā*]*kāya,* and sometimes opposed to an apparent prototype of the *nairmāṇikakāya.*[2810] We have also had cause to note the presence in this same text of unusual

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years, he had forged an indestructible body of adamant (已炼成金刚不坏之身), and also that Wu rounded off his preparations for death by avoiding cereals for a month beforehand. According to an article from the TV programme *Meili kexue* 魅力科學, *Funny Science* (*sic*) from Beijing Television's Science and Education Channel (BTV-3), streamed on the same web page, Wu also refused water in the last few days of his life. Further special measures were undertaken to desiccate the corpse at the time of burial. Su Huaren, a former museum official, refers explicitly in television interviews for the BTV-3 programme to the historical precedent of the sixth patriarch and Hanshan 漢山大師. According to the *Henan Shangbao wang,* one official at Lingquan Temple calls Su "a huckster", who has been known to advertise classes in Daoist" longevity techniques both in person and by correspondence, and also marketed a DVD, leading the anonymous author of this report to conclude (without any obvious irony), "Apparently, the drawcard of the '160-year old eminent monk' has already become a '*living* advertisement' (活广告, my emphasis)." The remainder of the *Henan Shangbao wang* story is an exposé, adducing evidence to show that Wu was no more than 100 or 102 at the time of his death, that the corpse may have been treated with formalin, etc. I am grateful to Justin Ritzinger for pointing me to this source.

[2808] See n. 952.

[2809] See n. 1210.

[2810] See n. 1884.

passages, for this date, suggesting that "love" or sexual desire is a path to realisation,[2811] and connected to aurifaction[2812] and the attainment of immortality by elixirs.[2813]

In short, it seems that MPPŚ is particularly rich in a number of otherwise unusual ideas about embodiments. Given the date of the text, this fact is of interest in itself, in that it provides yet another piece of evidence for the general ferment in ideas about embodiments around the fourth century. Further, however, if this sampling is at all representative, the specific ideas contained in the text may be of interest precisely because they are so unusual in the retrospective of later orthodoxy. MPPŚ may preserve for us vestiges of otherwise lost "paths not taken" in the history of ideas about embodiments, and offer us a prospect of complicating and deepening our understanding of the overall range of speculations about bodies, and particularly the body of the Buddha, in this period. For these reasons, and especially given the advantages for the study of this text presented by Lamotte's masterly treatment of a significant portion of it (*Traité*), it promises to offer a particularly rewarding field of further study.

6.2.6 Narrative literature – *avadānas, jātakas,* etc.

In a few cases in the course of this dissertation, we have had occasion to touch upon ideas about embodiments found in Buddhist narrative literature. The most notable instance of this dimension of the project was of course the ideas of the *Mahāvastu;*[2814] but we also touched on ideas in the *Divyâvadāna*,[2815] items from the Vinaya (esp. MSV), and so on. This is, of course, a

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[2811] See p. 1471, n. 3163.

[2812] See p. 1463.

[2813] See p. 1457.

[2814] See §4.2.4, also ideas about *manomayakāya,* p. 271.

[2815] See esp. the story of Māra and Upagupta, n. 1837; also n. 2220, n. 1858, n. 2167.

vast body of literature, and a systematic study of ideas about embodiment in it is an important desideratum for future work.

In particular, we might speculate, I believe, that one of the first signs of a shift in the history of ideas about embodiments towards the recognition of at least a partial possibility of more positive and adequate embodiments emerges in the process of the "jātakisation" of the Buddha's *bodhisattva* career, and a twofold meditation upon the immensity of his meritorious acts and the logical consequences of his accumulation of that vast store of merit for his person. This hypothesis might be evaluated further by a close study of the ideas incorporated in that literature about embodiments.

6.2.7 Effabilist expressions of ideal embodiment and the "iconic turn" in Buddhist art history

For the present, I remain unconvinced by recent attempts to argue that there was no "aniconic" period in the early history of Buddhist art.[2816] If, then, as it seems to me the evidence still suggests, Buddhist iconography did indeed reach a watershed, around the first century, at which Buddhas began to be represented in anthropomorphic form, it seems natural, in light of the findings of this dissertation, to ask whether this development was not connected to the advent of effabilism in the conception of the Buddha's embodiments.[2817]

[2816] See particularly Huntington, "Early Buddhist Art"; Dehejia, "Aniconism and the Multivalence of Emblems"; Huntington, "Aniconism and the Multivalence of Emblems: Another Look". See also Rhi, "From Bodhisattva to Buddha". Whatever explanations may be proposed by scholars, including Huntington's explanation, it seems to me that no evidence has yet been advanced to challenge the basic empirical fact that a period in which Buddhas were not depicted anthropomorphically was succeeded by one in which they were. For my present purposes, it will suffice to continue referring to the earlier period as "aniconic" and the shift to the latter period as the "iconic turn", without thereby necessarily following accepting all the baggage of that label from the discourse of Foucher etc.

[2817] See the definitions of relevant terms above at n. 39-42. Yiengpruksawan has argued some connections between changes in notions of the Buddha's various bodies and the iconic turn; see "Buddha's Bodies and the Iconographical Turn". However, her comments on the link between body discourse and iconography, and the reasons for the iconic turn, are extremely broad and speculative, and it is not easy to discern exactly what kinds of causal interrelationships she imagines; 395-396.

We have seen in this dissertation that the first clear intimations of the idea of positive and adequate embodiments of buddhahood emerge in ideas about the relics in the inscriptional record around the turn of the Common Era (§4.1.2.5).

We have also seen that by the dawn of the Chinese textual record, when we emerge from what I have here called the chronological "black box" that intervenes after the closure of the Pāli canon, we are in a radically different world, in which a whole range of nascent veritable embodiments are variously championed, including embodiment in gnosis, in the five pure aggregates, and (in an identification as yet not clearly articulated through the corporeal conceit) in the emergent Mahāyāna "absolute". We have also seen, in the same period, that the docetistic understanding of the Buddha's final earthly embodiment, and of many of his significant actions within it, had also already emerged by this time as the corollary of this new understanding of the Buddha's veritable embodiment. That is to say, that the recognition of other embodiments as most veritable entailed the demotion of the Buddha's ordinary earthly body to a status of attenuated reality. Taken as a whole, then, these are complex developments, which could not have sprung up overnight, but must rather have required a certain period of time to reach the stage we see in them in Lokakṣema's corpus.[2818] Pushing back from the time of Lokakṣema's translations (in the second part of the second century), therefore, it seems likely that at least parts of this discourse must have been emergent by the close of the first century at the latest.

From the direction both of the hints given us by the inscriptional record and the earliest Chinese evidence, then, it seems that the time around the first or second centuries was a

[2818] Cf. once more Harrison's comments cited n. 82.

turning point in the emergence of a recognition that positive and adequate embodiment was possible for buddhahood – what I have referred to in this dissertation as a turn to effabilism in the discourse of the Buddha's ideal embodiments. The emergence of anthropomorphic iconography of the Buddha may be part of the same general development, grounded in a similar understanding that a fuller immanence (fuller presencing in the world to other sentient beings) was possible, or even necessary for the accomplishment of his salvific works.

I know too little about Buddhist art history, however, to be sure that even the basic chronology I am relying upon here is truly accurate. Beyond this, I confess that I also cannot think of a way that the suggestion of a connection between these different domains could be taken beyond the status of a suggestion and scrutinised to establish or discredit its plausibility. I can only hope, therefore, that a scholar more capable than I am in these areas will take up this suggestion and examine it more competently than I could.[2819]

[2819] A significant difficulty for the proposition that this turn in iconography is linked to developments in the discourse of embodiments is posed, it seems to me, by consideration of the body of marks. It is generally accepted that the development of anthropomorphic representations of the Buddha is preceded in the art historical record by representations in which the Buddha is represented by various symbols. It is surely significant that among these symbolic iconographic representations of the Buddha we find items which were eventually incorporated in the model of the "body of marks" of the *mahāpuruṣa* (Ch. 3.1) – for example, his footprints, marked with the *dharmacakra* on the soles. However, we have already had occasion to note in this dissertation that a full body of marks emerges in the textual record long before we see the iconographic turn in art – certainly by the close of the Pāli canon. We might have expected, rather, that the coalescence of a full body of marks would *correlate* to the shift in iconography from discrete individual symbols of the Buddha to the assemblage of these symbols in a more or less full body. This expectation seems especially warranted in light of the fact that the full lists seem to be structured by a deliberate attempt to fill out the repertoire of symbols precisely in order that they comprise between them a full body – that is to say, we might understand that in the full lists, the Buddha's body does not just *bear* these marks, but that the marks exhaustively *comprise* the body, that is, that between them, the marks constitute in and of themselves a full embodiment with all the requisite members. The *Yogācārabhūmi* list of thirty-two, for instance, includes feet, fingers, toes, "limbs", legs, arms, penis, skin and its pores, hair, shoulders, neck, "body" *kāya* (in "a dignified body like that of a lion", *siṃha-pūrvārdha-kāya),* "body" *gātra* (in "erect body", *ṛjugātratā,* perhaps better "carriage"), teeth, cheeks, saliva, tongue, voice, eyes, eyelashes, and the crown of the head; in other words, it is structured by a systematic attempt to include all the important (external) parts of a complete body. If this is indeed the logic that animates the enumeration of these full lists, however, how are we to account for the fact that it may not be reflected in actual iconography, i.e. in the iconographic turn, until perhaps two full centuries later? Why would a notion of full embodiment, and apparently precisely a full body of *emblems,* lie fallow for so long before it was realised in the manufacture of actual emblems portraying it?

6.2.8 The five (ordinary) *skandhas* and *nāmarūpa*

On a number of occasions in this dissertation, I have made passing reference to my conviction that it might be shown that not just the physical (organic, biological) human body, but also more mental aspects of our being, are frequently treated as loci and types of "embodiment" by the Buddhist tradition.[2820] Once more, this is a direction in which I have not been able to pursue my arguments in detail here, but I believe that this, too, is a promising direction for further research. In the context of the historical period covered by this dissertation, I see two models in particular which I think would merit further consideration in this light.

The first, and historically surely the most important, of these models, is the fivefold *skandha* "aggregate") analysis that analyses the putative person in terms of visible physical matter (*rūpa*), sensation (*vedanā*), conception (*saṃjñā*), habituated attitude (*saṃskāra*) and consciousness (*vijñāna*). It is notable that in more than one case, terms that appear at their base to refer to the body *per se* are analysed in terms of five *skandha* analysis. Thus, *sôpadhiśeṣa-* and *nirupadhiśeṣanirvāṇadhātu,* which on the corporeal rereading are distinguished in terms of whether the Arhat is still alive, i.e. still has a body, or not, are also often differentiated in terms of the continuance or cessation of the five *skandhas.*[2821] Similarly, the *Mahāyānasaṃgraha* analyses the notion of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* ("revolutionary transformation of the basis") in terms of the five *skandhas* as *āśraya* ("basis").[2822] I believe that these are hints of a quite general pattern whereby the fivefold *skandha* model is regarded as a model of embodiment as a whole.

[2820] See §5.2.10, n. 1897, n. 1151.

[2821] See esp. n. 1897 for one instance.

[2822] See §5.2.10.

If this interpretation is correct, we can note, first, that it would provide a background against which to interpret the fact that the liberated person (Arhat, Buddha etc.) is frequently described, in various senses, as to be identified with the five "pure aggregates (*skandha*) of morality (*śīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), wisdom (*prajñā*), liberation (*vimukti*) and insight into the special knowledge of liberation (*vimuktijñānadarśana*). We have seen, most tellingly, that in Lokakṣema's *Aṣṭa* and other texts, the five pure aggregates are spoken of fairly straightforwardly as "bodies" of the Buddha.[2823] In later Sarvâstivāda Abhidharma materials, one model of the *dharmakāya* is that of embodiment in the same five pure aggregates.[2824] Beyond this, we have also seen that the pure aggregates seem to have their origin as an epitome of the model of practice and realisation articulated in the DN 2 (*Sāmaññaphala-sutta*) model, and this dissertation has also argued that this same model incorporates a certain model of re-embodiment as at least a necessary medium and stepping-stone to realisation at its heart; this use of the pure aggregates is seen as early as the *Subha-sutta* (DN 10).[2825] We saw, further, that the firm evidence that relics are regarded as veritable embodiments of the Buddhas is found in Kharoṣṭhī inscriptions around the turn of the Common Era that describe the relics as animated (*paribhāvita*) by these same five pure aggregates.[2826] Finally, though this evidence may perhaps be quite late, we also saw that Gregory Schopen cites a passage from the *Mūlasarvâstivāda-vinaya* in which the Buddha seems to be made to suggest that Śāriputra has in some sense survived his death in these same pure aggregates.[2827] These various claims make much better sense if we understand that the model of the five *ordinary* aggregates is from the

[2823] See §4.3.6, and esp. n. 1617.

[2824] See §4.4.9.

[2825] See p. 532.

[2826] §4.1.2.5, esp. p. 528 ff.

[2827] See p. 534.

outset a model of embodiment as a whole, and that the model of the five *pure* aggregates is itself, from very early on, a model, initially perhaps only half-articulated, of re-embodiment or of an alternative, more adequate and satisfactory embodiment. Conversely, if this reading has any sound basis, the use of the "five aggregates" rubric to articulate this vision of better embodiment is itself evidence that the five ordinary aggregates are to be understood as a model of ordinary embodiment, even including the more mental members of the rubric.

If this interpretation is correct, the idea of being "embodied" in the more mental instances incorporated in the fivefold *skandha* model – in such things as perception (sensation, *vedanā*), even, but even more so, in our concepts (*saṃjñā*), attitudes and volitions (*saṃskāra*), or even in our pure consciousness itself (*vijñāna*) – potentially poses a challenge to aspects of our most "commonsensical" notions of what it means to be embodied, what might comprise a "body", and what is embodied therein. In particular, this promises to be a point of focus for the examination of the implications of Buddhist ideas of embodiment for the "mind-body" problem. I will return to this point below, when I briefly address the comparison of this model with the mind-body dualism of Descartes as another important agenda for future research (§6.2.14).

Another such model, which arguably combines mental and physical components of the putative person in a single conception of "embodiment" is the very old notion of *nāmarūpa,* "name-and-form", especially as it enters into the twelvefold scheme of the members (*nidāna*) of dependent origination (*pratītyasamutpāda*) to refer to the psychophysical complex in which a sentient being is incarnated in the process of rebirth.[2828]

[2828] Cf. Maryla Falk, *Nama-rupa and Dharma-rupa.*

Because of the challenge they might hold for the ways we often conceive and speak of "mind-body", both of these models should be examined more closely in future in the overall framework provided by this dissertation.

6.2.9 The five "pure aggregates"

As I just summarised as part of the discussion in §6.2.8, the five "pure aggregates" (*anāsravaskandha*) recurred in a surprising number of disparate contexts studied in the course of this dissertation, and I was even moved to suggest that they comprise a kind of "hidden thread" binding together a range of conceptions of embodiment in Buddhist history.[2829] I have not been able, however, to attempt a systematic study of this rubric in the course of this study. I suspect that careful study of this rubric in its own right might reveal much of further interest.

6.2.10 Possible relations between special embodiments, "sustenance" (*āhāra*) and offerings in an "economy of merit"

We have already had occasion above to examine comments in *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* (AKBh) to 4.56 which seem to relate to the doctrine of *āśrayaparāvṛtti*. In this passage, the text discusses persons arisen from certain advanced spiritual states, and says that they have a "brand new basis", which Yaśomitra glosses by saying that they have a "brand new body".[2830] We did not have much opportunity there, however, to examine a further dimension of the passage, in which it says that persons arisen from two of the states in question are "fields of merit" (*puṇyakṣetra*),[2831] a claim which raises the possibility that the status of a person as a "field of merit" may be connected to their mode of embodiment. Unlike the avenues for future research

[2829] See p. 445.

[2830] See p. 1128.

[2831] See, however, n. 2488.

presented thus far, however, this one, it seems to me, requires that I set the background a little in order that it be rendered plausible, which will in turn require that we examine some fresh texts in a little detail first.

To my knowledge, no secondary scholar of the problem of Buddha bodies has explicitly observed that questions about the most appropriate and efficacious object of worship and recipient of offerings are often at play through Buddha-body discourse.[2832] This connection seems particular evident, for instance, in the opening chapters of the Mahāyāna *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra.*[2833] for instance, the impending crisis of the Buddha's bodily demise is signalled in part by the Buddha's repeated refusal to *accept offerings* from the assembled devotees. This crisis is played out in the melodramatic large-scale fashion typical of this *sūtra,* through a seemingly endless escalating series of ever more stupendous and splendiferous offerings, and every refusal occasions much (often literal) beating of breasts. The problem is solved, in the immediate sense, by Cunda (in Chapter II), whose offerings are indeed paltry by comparison to the hyperbolic offerings of the assembled gods etc. Critically, however, it seems that Cunda differs from the other supplicants in that he correctly articulates his need for the Tathāgata to accept his offerings in terms of his complete dependence upon the Tathāgata for blessings (the parable of the cow, the land, and the rain), rather than in terms of any notion that the Tathāgata might need what is offered. The Tathāgata, correspondingly, in accepting this offering, echoes this understanding, when he says, "I will now receive your last offering and let you accomplish *dānapāramitā*." In other words, it seems, the first of the Mahāyāna perfections, and the primary means of spiritual advancement for laypeople in particular, is

[2832] Some relevant passages are listed, without much general comment on their significance in this direction, by Demiéville and la Vallée Poussin.

[2833] For English translations here, I worked primarily from an unpaginated internet edition of the Yamamoto translation of this text, and so am unable to provide page numbers.

entirely dependent upon the grace of other beings (especially, but not exclusively, Buddhas; even in Cunda's case, the hope is expressed that his offerings "they will satisfy the Tathāgata *and Sangha*"). This will mean, of course, that in the absence of appropriate beings to extend this grace, the practice of that perfection will be impossible – fields of merit are utterly necessary to the pursuit of the path.

As the dialogue goes on, the virtues of various "fields of merit" to whom one can make an offering are compared, in terms that echo the *Abhidharmakośa* passage above.[2834] First, the Buddha says that there are "two fruits that know of no distinction" in the making of offerings, namely *anuttarasaṃyaksambodhi* and [*pari*]*nirvāṇa*. The implication seems clearly to be that the merit won by an offering to a being who attains one of these two attainments immediately *after* the offering (as opposed to before the transforming accomplishment in virtue of which a being becomes a *puṇyakṣetra*, as in the case of the AKBh passage) will be equal in each case, and in both cases far surpass the merit won by any other offerings. In a turn typical of this *sūtra,* where it seems that the Buddha often plays devil's advocate to demonstrations of insight by the most perceptive of his interlocutors, this claim is however immediately refuted by Cunda:

> "At that, Cunda said to the Buddha: 'You say that there is no difference between the results of these two offerings. But this is not so. Why not? Because in the former case of receiving *dāna* [a charitable gift], illusion is not yet done away with [in the recipient] and he is not yet perfect in all-knowledge. And he cannot yet cause beings to enjoy *dānapāramitā*. As to the latter category of receiving *dāna*, illusion has gone and he is accomplished in all-knowledge and can let all beings be blessed equally with *dānapāramitā*. The former man who receives offerings is still a common being, but the latter the heaven of heavens. One that receives *dāna* in the former category is one with
>
> 1) a body supported by various kinds of food,
> 2) a body of illusion,
> 3) a body where there yet remains the result of illusion, and
> 4) a non-eternal body.[2835]

[2834] These portions of the dialogue have been noted for their doctrines of Buddha bodies by Demiéville, "Busshin" 178.

[2835] Note the clear connection to the DN 2 "snake slough" model's description of the inadequacy of the given physical body, reflected in the first and last of these attributes; DN 2 clearly describes the

"'A person who receives *dāna* in the second category has
1) the body of no illusion,
2) the adamantine body [*vajrakāya*],[2836]
3) the Dharma body (*dharmakāya*)
4) the eternal body (**nityakāya*?), and
5) the boundless body.

"'How can one say that the results of the *dāna* performed in the two categories are one and do not differ? The person who receives *dāna* in the former category is one not yet accomplished in *dānapāramitā* [and other *pāramitā*s] up to *prajñāpāramitā* [perfected Wisdom]. He only has the fleshly eye, but not the Buddha-eye, nor the eye of Wisdom. The case of the person receiving *dāna* in the latter category is that of one perfect in *dānapāramitā* up to *prajñāpāramitā*, and also in the fleshly eye up to the eye of Wisdom. How can we say that the results of the two *dāna*s are the same and that there is no difference? O World-honoured One! In the case of the former, one who receives *dāna* takes meals which get into his abdomen and get digested, and he gains life, carnal body, power, ease, and unhindered speech. In the case of the latter, the person does not eat, digest, and there are no results of the five things. How can we say that the results of the two *dāna*s are one and the same and not different?'"[2837]

The larger solution to the problem of the best field of merit to which one can make offerings, therefore, is that one makes them not, even to the Buddha, to one embodied in the fleshly form that subtends the remaining earthly lifespan between initial *sôpadhiśeṣanirvāṇa* and *parinirvāṇa,* but to one embodied in an entirely different order altogether – that is, to the *dharmakāya,* the *vajrakāya*, etc. The concern of later parts of the *sūtra* with embodiment in a form that is specifically immortal and indestructible (especially Chapter V on the *vajrakāya*) is surely closely linked to this problematic posed in its opening pages.

Lest it be thought that the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* and AKBh are freak anomalies for this connection between the problem of Buddha bodies and the problem of the most worthy objects of offerings (or worship more generally), we should also recall to mind the discussion in *Aṣṭa* (§4.3.3) of the relative merit earned by offering *worship* to relics or to a Prajñāpāramitā text. In

inadequate given physical body as "fed on rice and gruel" (*odanakummāsūpacayo*) and "impermanent". See §2.3.2, passage cited at n. 559.

[2836] Cf. §5.1.7.

[2837] Trans. Yamamoto, no pagination; Sanskrit Romanisation modified.

that context, also, as we saw, the whole problem is presented in terms of various embodiments of the Buddha – so much so that I suggested that the polemic against relics *as veritable Buddha-bodies* (*śarīrāṇi*) might have been part of the dynamic at work in the emergence of more effabilist conceptions of other adequate embodiments of the Buddha. Again, the **Mahāprajñāpāramitāśāstra* contains a passage, immediately following on a claim that to contemplate emptiness is to see the *dharmakāya* of the Buddha, to the effect that this contemplation is also the "true, most sublime *offering*".[2838] In both these (broadly speaking) Prajñāpāramitā contexts, then, offerings and Buddha bodies are once more related questions, as much as the details of the exact connection between them differs in each case.

It may be relevant, in puzzling out the connections between these different problematics, to bear in mind that the prototypical *dāna*-cum-offering is food.

To begin with, even in principle, the need for ordinary worldly food (the "staff of life") constantly reminds us of the transient, dependent (conditioned) and therefore "impure" nature of the body it sustains. Food is therefore logically tied into the complex of troubling features of corruptible, mortal corporeality in whose terms the body as a key component of the problem of suffering is articulated in Buddhism.

However, this suggestion that ordinary food falls under the same shadow of suspicion as the ordinary body is not proffered on merely *a priori* grounds. It is confirmed by the doctrine of *āhāra* or "sustenances", as expressed for instance at AK 3.38d-41.[2839] The context here is an extended examination of *saṃsāra* and its conditions. Immediately prior to these verses, the text

[2838] Cited in Demiéville, "Busshin" 181.

[2839] La Vallée Poussin, AKBh II, 119-128.

has considered at great length the details of all the members of the twelvefold chain of interdependent origination (*pratītyasamutpāda*). A significant thrust of this analysis has (naturally) been to explain *pratītyasamutpāda* as a *karmic* fact, that is, as a mechanism whereby beings continue to be reborn in various destinies coloured with moral values and possibilities – in other words, to explain the nature of the bonds that tie beings to suffering existence in *saṃsāra*. At 3.38d, the text broaches a new subject, namely, how the existence of beings is "maintained" or "sustained" (*/sthā*) in a world once it has first arisen, i.e. once they have taken rebirth (*bhava*) therein. "The world is maintained by sustenances", proclaims the Lord (*āhārasthithikaṃ jagat*) (3.38d), referring of course to the "world" of "worldlings" (*jagat*, i.e. "beings", *sattva*), that is, the entire round of *saṃsāra.*

The text then propounds four kinds of such sustenance, namely "sustenance in mouthsful" (*kavaḍīkāra āhāra*), i.e. ordinary food; contact (*sparśa*); *manaḥsaṃcetanā* ("idea" or "expectation");[2840] and *vijñāna.*[2841] At 40ab, the text specifies further that the last three of these categories (*sparśa,*[2842] *manaḥsaṃcetanā* and *vijñāna*) are "sustenance" only when they are impure; "sustenance in mouthsful", which only exists in the *kāmadhātu* (39ab) is presumably not mentioned here because all existence in the *kāmadhātu* (*upapattibhava*) is impure and never (karmically) good or neutral.[2843]

[2840] Defined at Bh to III.40ab, la Vallée Poussin II, 121, as *mānasa karman,* "mental action". In explaining how this can constitute "sustenance", various stories are related about people who were on the brink of starvation but staved off death by the "thought" or hope that food was at hand (la Vallée Poussin 124-125). Edgerton translates "living on hope", s.v. *manaḥsaṃcetanā.*

[2841] I.e. the *vijñānaskandha;* Bh to 3.40ab.

[2842] Defined at Bh to 3.30b, la Vallée Poussin II, 96, as produced by the encounter of three elements: the sense organ, the object, and consciousness.

[2843] Bh to 3.37d-38b, la Vallée Poussin II, 118.

It is thus a definitional feature of "sustenance" that it be bad and impure. In fact, AKBh goes on to cite Vaibhāṣika lore to the effect that "'Sustenance' means that which makes existence (*bhava*) increase; when [sustenances] are pure, their effect is the destruction of existence."[2844] In other words, sustenance is a fetter to the round of rebirth and redeath, and it is that feature, in fact, that defines a thing as sustenance. This is supported by reference to the *sūtra* literature,[2845] to the effect that the sustenances bring about the maintenance (*sthiti*) and support (*yāpana*) of those who already exist (*bhūta*), and to encourage (*anu/grah*) those who desire rebirth (*saṃbhavavaiṣin*[2846]). The text goes on to specify, "When *sparśa, saṃcetanā* or *vijñāna* are pure, they do not have these effects," with the clear implication, by omission, that "sustenance by mouthsful", i.e. physical food, cannot be pure, and is *always* such a fetter to the round of rebirth and redeath. The four sustenances are thus the very "root" of the five *upādānaskandhas* of a new rebirth; they are further the causal condition (*pratyaya*) for old-age-and-death (*jarāmaraṇa*) in future existence.[2847]

The text then further goes on to specifically link these negative features of sustenance to embodiment. The four sustenances are divided into two pairs, one oriented to the maintenance of present existence, and another to the maintenance of links between this existence and future existence. Thus *manaḥsaṃcetanā* (which, let us recall, was defined as a "mental act" or intentional *karma*) projects (*ā/kṣip*) a future existence,[2848] and *vijñāna* (as in the twelvefold chain)

[2844] La Vallée Poussin II, 122.

[2845] References given in la Vallée Poussin II, 122 n. 1: *cattāro 'me bhukkhave āhārā bhūtānāṃ ṭhitiyā saṃbhavavesīnaṃ vā anuggahāya* etc.

[2846] This expression is immediately glossed as referring to those in the *antarābhava* or "intermediate state", who are referred to as "desirous of existence" because their nature drives them towards the place of *upapattibhava*.

[2847] La Vallée Poussin II, 124.

[2848] On this category, see n. 1903.

is the germ of that existence. By contrast to these, "sustenance in mouthsful" and contact (*sparśa*)[2849] are said to make flourish respectively the support (*āśraya*[2850]) and that which it supports (*āśrita*) in present existence, namely, the physical body with its various organs (*sêndriyaḥ kāyaḥ*)[2851] and mind and associated *dharmas* (*cittacaitta*).

Thus, in this (typically complex) AKBh passage, it is clear that ordinary "sustenance" or food is problematic and impure precisely insofar as it sustains continued bodily existence in the world of suffering (*saṃsāra*), and that the extended category of "sustenances" that bind beings more generally to that world not only in the continuation of a single incarnation, but through multiple incarnations, derives its sense from that same basic conception. I believe it is possible to suggest that offering is to food as is the ideal to given embodiment, that is, it represents an apparent analogue to the ordinary worldly item which, however, has been radically *transformed* so that it partakes of the transcendent, supramundane order of utter liberation.

At this point we might return to MPNS where we left it three or four pages ago, and the nice distinction drawn by Cunda in his back-talk to the Buddha. Recall that the Buddha had proposed that one who attains *anuttarasaṃyaksambodhi* and one who enters *parinirvāṇa* are equal to one another, and otherwise unsurpassed, as fields of merit to which beings might make

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[2849] Note that even those offerings and charitable gifts that are not ordinary food, which I am here treating as prototypical of this class of things, are almost always objects of the senses, and therefore, when "impure", would count as (occasions for?) *āhāra* in the sense of *sparśa.* This is particularly clear in the case of offerings: "Suppose . . . a son or daughter of good family has written down this perfection of wisdom, made a copy of it; he would then put it up, and would honour, revere, worship and adore it *with heavenly flowers, incense, perfumes, wreaths, unguents, aromatic powders, strips of cloth, parasols, banners, bells, flags, with rows of lamps all round, and with manifold kinds of worship . . .* " (*Aṣṭa,* Conze 105); in other words, with all the most lovely appurtenances of sensuous luxury.

[2850] Note, of course, the connection to *āśrayaparāvṛtti.* In fact, we had occasion to note this same passage in the discussion of *āśrayaparāvṛtti,* at n. 2491.

[2851] Pradhan 154.

offerings. To this, Cunda had retorted that one who is about to enter *parinirvāṇa* is far superior to one who one who is about to attain *anuttarasaṃyaksambodhi* as a recipient of offerings. We noted that many of the criteria to which he appealed to argue this superiority had to do with the respective *bodies* of beings with the two types of attainment; and foremost among his qualms about the (inferior) body of one with (only!) the attainment of *anuttarasaṃyaksambodhi* was that such a one has "a body *supported by various kinds of food*".

Surprising though it may be to find such scruples in the context of the MPNS, then, with its colourful, prolix, sensationalist "*sūtra*-thumping" sermonising, it seems that Cunda here is troubled by a logic that would not have been alien to the doctors of the Abhidharma. If the recipient of an offering is a being yet embodied in an impure body of the *kāmadhātu,* sustained by impure sustenance, and to that degree, therefore, presumably not yet entirely disencumbered of the fetters that tie us to *saṃsāra* – how can such a being ever constitute a paramount field of merit?

It seems to me that we glimpse in these various passages a hitherto entirely neglected theme in the problem of the Buddha's bodies, whereby (1) certain extraordinary spiritual experiences are held to fundamentally alter the very embodiment of a being; (2) this transmutation of physical state effects far-reaching changes in the efficacy of that being as an object of *dāna*/offerings; and (3) these related changes may be related to a purification of the very substance of the offering (or sustenance), whereby it is transformed from a fetter to the wheel of bondage into a catalyst of liberatory transcendence of conditions.[2852] This set of interrelated ideas is moreover spread across a broad range of texts from quite different quarters of the

[2852] This third point is admittedly the most speculative of the three points I put forward here. I base it mostly on the hint given in the AKBh that "'Sustenance' means that which makes existence (*bhava*) increase; when [sustenances] are pure, their effect is the destruction of existence," which seems to suggest that (at least the last three) sustenances admit of purification.

tradition (*Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra,* Prajñāpāramitā, Sarvâstivādin Abhidharma) and therefore presumably in that degree quite a fundamental theme in Buddhism quite broadly, not confined to a single doctrinal stream or school. It seems that the powerful transformation undergone by the beings considered *puṇyakṣetra* transform them not only "gnostically" but also somatically, as we have consistently noted in many respects throughout this dissertation – and, perhaps, that a further implication of this somatic dimension of their transformation is that they can somehow purify ordinary worldly objects given to them and make of them merit-generating offerings.

Without further research, the best I can do is offer a series of questions that seem to stem from the broader patterns possibly glimpsed here. For example: Is the transmutation of embodiment merely a part of a broader pattern of transmutation of all the pertinent features of worldliness into their opposite, i.e. into transcendence? Further, then, does the logic of immanence run through more than embodiment, to systematically include in turn the conditions and entanglements embodiment implies, and rests upon? It seems that we might even understand things as follows. The radical transformation of embodiment is a sign that the insight of the Buddha frees him from all conditions and determinations, that is, all laws, including not merely his own bondage to *karma* but his subjection to physical law. Perhaps, ultimately, this transformation of the Buddha's entire being, physical as well as moral, for his own benefit, is merely a part of an even larger picture in which his absolute liberation also transcends the distinction between self and other. On this understanding, the economy of merit in exchange for offerings might stem from a dimension of this freedom whereby buddhahood can also transcend the usual law of individuation that insulates self from other. In other words, the Buddha's transcendence may abrogate the entire order of *karma,* not just for himself but for all beings, such that the Buddha can wield his power to intervene even in the karmic ledger of

other beings. If buddhahood is maximal greatness, absolute freedom, and plenary power, after all, then we might expect nothing less – that any limitation or finitude of which we can conceive must ultimately be transcendable by its might. Is this then the logic that underwrites the notion of the transference of merit, otherwise so troubling to the regular (dare we say "worldly") understanding of the very notion of *karma* and the foundations of Buddhist teachings?

Further exploration of these possibilities, it strikes me, would require very substantial further work. It would be necessary not only to ascertain the extent to which the links touched upon here in a few representative texts are attested in a broader range of literature, but also to examine in greater depth the very conception of merit – and the related problem of its transfer – that apparently underpins and is intimately related to the ideas glimpsed here. The problem of merit and its transfer, however, is a knotty and complex one in its own right, and I expect that this fact alone would render the pursuit of the possibility I suggest here quite complex.

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Thus far, the directions I have suggested for further research have been confined to materials that at least in part fall within the historical period already targeted by this dissertation. In the following, I turn to consideration of several important topics lying primarily or entirely in the history of ideas about embodiments subsequent to the relatively arbitrary cutoff-point of the work presented here around the turn of the fifth century. If I have been able to argue effectively in this dissertation, as I have attempted to, that the study of the problem of embodiment in Buddhism to date has been dominated by an unjustified and obfuscating

teleological focus on *trikāya*, then it should be apparent that the study of later developments, including but not restricted to those I point to here, comprises largely virgin and potentially very fruitful soil.

6.2.11 The extension of aspects of this history in Paramārtha's *amalavijñāna*: a key moment in the so-called "Sinification" of Buddhism in sixth-century China

The great translator and missionary-monk Paramārtha (499-569, Ch. Zhendi 真諦) is famous for his coinage of the concept of **amalavijñāna* or "taintless consciousness" (*amoluoshi* 阿摩羅識), which at least as early as the works of Tiantai Zhiyi 智顗 (538-597) became known as a "ninth consciousness" complementary to the more standard Yogācāra typology of eight consciousnesses. This development is of particular interest for larger questions in Chinese and Buddhist intellectual history as a whole, because it is linked to the problem of the so-called "Sinification" of Buddhism.

To put a complex matter as simply as possible, it has often been held in past scholarship that one major aspect of the Sinification of Buddhist ideas was their recasting in a more "world-affirming", "this-worldly", "optimistic" mould, where in India, Buddhism was at its origins by contrast (almost the quintessential example of) a "world-denying", "other-worldly" and even "pessimistic" system. The claim that this transformation represents a Sinification is, of course, based upon Weberian characterisations of Chinese thought and civilisation as a whole as "this-worldly" etc. If Buddhism in China indeed underwent a general shift in this direction, then, that shift is perceived as at once the sign of an inexorable influence of basic presuppositions of a Chinese "worldview", on the one hand, and also comprises one of the best proofs of the very existence of such a typically "Chinese" tendency in thought and religion, on the other. In what

follows, I will refer to the claim that Buddhism was Sinified in this particular manner as the "optimistic-worldly Sinification hypothesis".

One very significant piece in the general narrative of Buddhist ideas in China that is adduced to support this hypothesis of a conceptual "Sinification", in the directions the Weberian model would lead us to expect, is the fact that in China and East Asia more generally, *tathāgatagarbha* doctrine is supposed to have wound up at the centre of a more or less universally accepted doctrinal ground of "orthodoxy", or at least common basic assumptions, especially as articulated in the seminal *Awakening of Faith in Mahāyāna*.[2853] This development is thought to support the "optimistic-worldly Sinification" hypothesis, basically, because *tathāgatagarbha* doctrine, or its East Asian offshoot in the concept of "Buddha nature" (*foxing* 佛性), holds that all sentient beings have the potential (or even the eventual assurance) of being saved.[2854] To this is often conjoined the related claim that *tathāgatagarbha,* in claiming that buddhahood is

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[2853] *Dasheng qi xin lun* 大乘起信論, T1666; title sometimes "reconstructed" as **Mahāyānaśraddhôtpāda-śāstra* etc. Ascribed as a translation to Paramārtha in the Chinese canon, but now most generally and plausibly thought to be a composition made in China; though the question of exactly who might have made it, and when, remains vexed.

[2854] Dan Lusthaus has also claimed recently in his *Buddhist Phenomenology* that many of these same developments are indicative of "Sinification" in a different direction, namely that they wrong-headedly impose metaphysics and the illusion of personhood or self onto Buddhist ideas. Lusthaus characterises these "deviant" or "heretical" forms of Buddhism, which he holds were based upon translations that Xuanzang "rightly considered deficient and misleading", as "essentializing", "ontological-metaphysical", "reifying" and "hypostasized". More specifically, they propounded a "heavily ontologized notion of self" ("eternal *shen*"; "*shen*-like transcendent self"). Xuanzang undertook his journey to India to seek "direly needed correctives" to these inaccuracies, deviations, and "supplements", but his massive work of translation and retranslation ultimately failed historically to overcome the "deeply ingrained native tradition", and the "deviant" and "heretical" Chinese forms won the day. Worth noting for the purposes of my current project is that for Lusthaus, Paramārtha's integration of *tathāgatagarbha* doctrines with Yogācāra is a significant step in the elaboration of this "deviant Yogācāra", for obvious reasons. See esp. *Buddhist Phenomenology* 364-371, and also 8, 256, 320; also his analysis of Paramārtha's and Xuanzang's translations of the *Triṃśikā,* 323-349, which is shot through with the same views, and clearly intended to demonstrate them. I believe that an adequate treatment of the history of the transfer of Buddhist ideas to China should ultimately show that Lusthaus's arguments for this "metaphysical-ontological" Sinification are, like the hypothesis of an "optimistic-worldly" Sinification, flawed on a number of grounds. Indeed, ultimately Lusthaus's views are, I further believe, of a piece with the "optimistic-worldly" hypothesis, and a better analysis of Paramārtha's ideas and their significance in Buddhist history will require refutation of both species of "Sinification" model.

present at least *in potentia* in all sentient beings, enables a much more positive evaluation of this world as a whole, in that the radical immanence posited by this claim shoots the worldly through with the font and locus of ultimate value; this claim that greater immanence supports or equals greater this-worldliness is often further buttressed by reference to ideas that equate *tathāgatagarbha* or Buddha-nature with *dharmatā,* the *dharmadhātu,* Thusness etc., so that it infuses not just sentient beings but all the world.

It is not of course claimed that these ideas are entirely Chinese in their provenance, since they all have clear Indic antecedents. Nonetheless, the optimistic-worldly Sinification hypothesis explains the immense popularity and authority of these ideas in China by arguing that these dimensions of the overall spectrum of Buddhist ideas confirmed best with a fundamental Chinese faith in the potential of human nature for good and the possibility of perfection in this world. This supposed set of fundamental and enduring "Chinese" presuppositions is frequently traced back at least to a supposed Mencian victory in the "human nature" debates of the late Warring States (where the opposing position is represented archetypally by Xunzi). Thus, on this hypothesis, Buddhism arrived in China with at best a minority strand of these "optimistic-worldly" ideas, which were singled out by the filters of the Chinese "worldview" and the presuppositions built into it, and under their influence, rapidly built into the centre of an East Asian orthodoxy that is sometimes considered different enough from Indian Buddhism that it is thought to have lost the plot entirely, and been transformed into something Buddhist in name alone, and no longer in spirit.

In its full dimensions, this "optimistic-worldly Sinification" hypothesis are of course much more complex than this, but this simplified summary should suffice to enable us to locate Paramārtha's idea of **amalavijñāna* in this history, and thereby to show the connection of this

concept and the moment it represents in Chinese Buddhist history to the problematic of embodiment studied here.

**Amalavijñāna* is connected to the supposed process of "optimistic-worldly" Sinification because it conveys the notion that the human mind is always already fundamentally pure (it is connected in this regard, for example, with an old conception of *prakṛtiprabhāsvaracitta,* "the aboriginally translucent mind"). Thus, it inserts at the heart of the Yogācāra system, at the level of a substrate in some sense subtending even the supposedly most fundamental stratum of *ālayavijñāna* ("storehouse consciousness"), a doctrinal instance that functions as a locus and medium for the grounding of all Yogācāra on *tathāgatagarbha.* The "taintless consciousness" is the ultimate truth of our being; realisation is the purification of that taintless consciousness of adventitious defilements (equated with the radical expurgation of the *ālayavijñāna*); and it is in precisely in being grounded upon such a taintless consciousness that our being can be spoken of as *tathāgatagarbha,* "buddhahood in embryo", or having "Buddha-nature", i.e. the innate potential for buddhahood.

On the other hand, **amalavijñāna* is tied into the history of ideas about embodiments that we have traced here by the simple fact, first, that in many contexts where Paramārtha uses the term (阿摩羅識, 淨識, 摩羅識, 無垢識) and it is possible to locate a parallel notion in an Indic text, it turns out that he uses it for *āśrayaparāvṛtti* ("the revolutionary transformation of the basis").[2855] Thus, Paramārtha's famous conception emerges directly from what I have argued in

[2855] See Iwata, "Shintai no amarashiki setsu"; the most exhaustive summary of Paramārtha's **amalavijñāna* passages in the secondary literature. The question of what is meant by "locating a parallel notion in an Indic text" is related to the complex nature of Paramārtha's corpus, many parts of which are neither simple translation nor simple creation *ex nihilo,* and I will not broach it here. **Amalavijñāna* is also used in correspondence to other Indic terms, of course, including (possibly) the variant *āśrayaparivṛtti,* but also (apparently; in many cases reconstructing from Tib.) *āśrayaparivṛttibalādhāna, viśuddhavijñāna, prabhāsvaracitta* itself*, lokôttarajñāna.*

this dissertation is an important branch of the history of embodiment doctrines as a whole, and arguably, a proper understanding of **amalavijñāna* and its significance in the history of Buddhist doctrine can only be arrived at upon the basis of an adequate interpretation of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* as a part of that history.

A reassessment of **amalavijñāna* in this new light should thus comprise an important component in the important task of a more sophisticated assessment of Paramārtha's corpus and the ideas contained therein than has been made to date. If I am correct in locating *āśrayaparārvṛtti* and therefore ultimately **amalavijñāna* as part of the larger history of ideas about embodiments, such study should also be undertaken in conjunction with an examination of other ideas about the Buddha's embodiments throughout Paramārtha's corpus. We can expect that one piece of material that will be particularly relevant in this regard is the chapter of the *Suvarṇaprabhāsôttama-sūtra* on the bodies of the Buddha,[2856] which is only found in Paramārtha's translation and later versions of the text that may derive therefrom, and which therefore may contain ideas original to Paramārtha himself.

In the context of the larger history of Buddhist ideas in China, then, and the influential interpretation of that history in terms of the "optimistic-worldly Sinification" hypothesis, Paramārtha's ideas are key; and the relationship between what is conceivably his most important single idea and the history of doctrines of embodiment is potentially very close. The reexamination of Paramārtha's use of various conceptions of embodiment therefore represents a very good *entrée* into these larger questions, and is one direction in which I myself intend to take further research stemming from this dissertation in the near future. Indeed, it was

[2856] 三身分別品, Chapter 3 in the synthetic version of the text (合部金光明經) in which Paramārtha's chapters are included, T664.362c10-365b11. This chapter is found in Yijing's T665, and in the Tibetan translation from Yijing also.

initially in part the intention to fill in historical background necessary for this task that led me to the present topic in the first place, and derailed my earlier intention to write a dissertation on Paramārtha directly; in a sense, then, this entire dissertation can be regarded as a (somewhat elephantine!) prolegomenon to that study.

I strongly suspect that the most urgent imperative in the reassessment of the actual significance and sources of Paramārtha's ideas is a broad and careful assessment of their relationships to their antecedents in his Indic Buddhist sources, after the model of the study proposed here of **amalavijñāna* in relation to *āśrayaparāvṛtti* and other ideas about embodiments. Indeed, such work may even be more pressing than the also important reassessment of the place of Paramārtha's ideas in the history of Buddhist and other ideas in sixth century China. I expect that the better fulfilment of both of these tasks, regardless of their relative priority, will lead to the identification of much more specific and historically "local" reasons that Paramārtha may have considered the questions he did, and proposed to those questions his particular concepts and answers. To the extent that such considerations will do the explanatory work formerly expected of the "optimistic-worldly" Sinification hypothesis by its proponents, I hope that they will be one important piece in the undoing of that hypothesis, which I suspect is for a number of other reasons ultimately untenable and misleading. I hope, then, that this work will eventually have the potential to pose a significant challenge to aspects of the overall general characterisation of Chinese ideas and narratives of their history that remain relatively unchallenged parts of stereotypes that circulate quite widely even today.

6.2.12 The ongoing history of the dialectic between ideas about relics and ideas of the Buddha's other embodiments

We have already had occasion earlier in this dissertation (§4.1.1) to survey a wide range of ideas about relics in the Buddhist tradition, across several cultures and through to the second millennium, when I argued that this range of evidence shows, in a number of ways, that relics were certainly very widely considered veritable bodies of the Buddha. At that juncture, I was unable to do more than point briefly at each of these phenomena, and my survey was anything but systematic. However, I did say enough there, I believe, to allow me to dispose quite quickly of this important agenda for future research here, simply by recalling several of the more interesting dimensions of the later history of ideas about relics touched on there that would merit further study.

In particular, as I already suggested earlier in this dissertation, it seems likely that the rise of the significant notion of "*dharma* relics" (*dharmaśarīra*) is another step in the tug-of-war or dialectic between different conceptions of the Buddha's most veritable embodiments. If the initial emergence of (other) positive notions of adequate embodiments for buddhahood was perhaps in part provoked by the cult of relics and an attempt to critique it or appropriate part of its authority (and patronage) for other conceptions, as I have argued in this dissertation, then it would make sense for proponents of relics to strike back and subsume even the teachings and the material media that transmit them to the category of relics.

Further, it seems possible that a natural corollary to the vicissitudes of the notion of immanence, *per se,* might be a parallel set of vicissitudes of materiality, as a large category, and particularly of material things supposed to be somehow infused with the immanent sacred (as is generally conveyed by the useful Eliadean notion of "hierophany"). Thus, even with regard

to one and the same veritable embodiment of the Buddha – such as the teachings – we can conceive of reasons, on either side of the "antinomy of immanence", to emphasise now the content and now the form of that embodiment; now an order of reality to which an embodiment notionally points, and now the very vessel of that embodiment; now the moon, and now the finger that points to it. At one extreme of this dialectical field held between the poles of the antinomy of immanence lies a pole of radical immanence where there are good reasons for emphasising the hard materiality of even the most apparently symbolic forms of embodiment predicated of the Buddha in various contents, and it seems likely that this is another underlying determinant behind the emergence of the apparently paradoxical notion of *dharmaśarīra*.

Related to this category, and I suspect certainly worthy of a broad systematic study in its own right, is the perhaps even stranger category of *dharmakāyaśarīra*, which we saw crops up in a number of contexts, but of which there has been given hardly any serious analysis.[2857] This category further seems to be related, in both its date and in the contexts in which it is found, to the further turn towards radical immanence I will suggest immediately below can be found in Tantric contexts.

Finally, another dimension of the overall field of relics that would arguably benefit from consideration as part of what I am claiming here is a very large and coherent field of ideas about the various embodiments of buddhahood as a whole is the "flesh body", or (mummified, sometimes spontaneously so) whole-body relic, as it figures in East Asian Buddhism and particularly Chan.

[2857] See p. 482 ff.

6.2.13 Chan and Tantra ideas of embodiment as an even further turn to the pole of radical immanence?

The well-known slogan of Tantra, in East Asia at least, that one can or should aim to "become a Buddha in this very body" (*ji shen cheng fo* 即身成佛),[2858] might be read as suggesting that "this very body", can be an entirely valid and valuable embodiment of full buddhahood, without any need for radical transmutation. This seems to propose a level of immanentalism in embodiment that goes well beyond anything we have see in the history we have surveyed here.

In the materials studied in this dissertation, generally speaking, the more anthropomorphic of the Buddha's embodiments were held to be less veritable (docetism), or the more veritable embodiments held to be somehow quite remote from the ordinary body (embodiment in gnosis, embodiment in *dharmatā* etc.). Even relics, insofar as they are considered embodiments of the Buddha, are strikingly removed in their form and apparent nature from the ordinary body, as much as they may perhaps be regarded as also products of that body; their production entails the at least partial destruction of that body (it is smashed into particles as numerous as mustard seeds, etc.), and this moment looks very much like ordinary death. In all these respects, it seems, throughout the history we have traced here, Buddhism, however much it flirts with the corporeal conceit as a vehicle for articulating various conceptions of buddhahood, stops short of carrying that conceit to its endpoint and imagining precisely *the ordinary given body* as such a vehicle.

Tantrism, by contrast, seems to have no such qualms. It is possible to wonder, therefore, whether Tantrism does not continue and deepen the ongoing process of radical

[2858] We should note that "body" (*shen*) here is often interpreted as merely being a synecdoche for "in this lifetime".

immanentalisation of buddhahood, which we traced in the context of the history of embodiments through a large arc from the almost total ineffabilism of the earliest tradition to the effabilist and eventually kataphatic modes of ideal embodiment in the earlier Mahāyāna. This seems, at first blush at least, to be related to the broader dimension of Tantrism in which it seems unconditionally and systematically to embrace precisely all that is most troubling about the ordinary conditioned world of suffering. In regard to embodiment, in particular, we can traced this basic tendency through the deliberate courting of the corrupt and the obscene; the celebration of sex and scatology; cadaverism, necrophiliac imagery or perhaps even practice, and other deliberate contacts with death, and so on; in short, its challenging systematic sacralisation of all the categories of human disgust.[2859]

To give a single very striking instance, the *Caṇḍamahārōṣaṇa-tantra* (which is in places spectacularly obscene) is an excellent example of what we might call a challenging, systematic sacralisation of all the categories of human disgust. In one place, the text explains that a person who is tired after "performing copulation" can "recuperate" by systematically defiling himself. He first "should concentratedly eat fish/ and meat and drink wine, and other/ food, whatever he has, cooked food,/ etc., milk and juice;" he should further make sure that the woman defiles this food before he eats it; but this is only the beginning:

> " . . . he should drink her mouthwash
> and wash-water of the Lotus [vagina]. And,
> taking the wash-water of the anus,
> the practitioner should wash his
> mouth, etc.
> He should eat her vomit, and eat
> the feces! And he should drink the
> fluid of the vagina, and eat phlegm.[2860]

[2859] See Section 5.5 below for an example.

[2860] See also, for example, further examples of coprophagy (56, 64), as well as incest (56, 59), patricide (59) etc.

> "Just as when manure is applied, a
> tree becomes abundantly fruitful,
> so does a person have the true
> fruits of pleasure by eating
> unclean things".[2861]

The implication for the problematic of embodiment seems clear. For so long as we maintain any notion of the sacred as that which, in Durkheim's apt formal definition, is "that which set apart", our very bodies are going to be inscribed, not to say riven, with alienating boundaries between pure and impure, and we will be divided from ourselves on the one hand and the sacred on the other. Any notion of true immanence, it seems, finds its logical end-point in precisely such doctrines, whereby everything *but everything* is shot through with the sacred, and we can only realise that immanence and access that sacred if we confront embodied it in precisely those (frequently very viscerally challenging and even stinking) forms where our preconceptions least prepare us to find it.[2862]

> "Never should the practitioner think
> in terms of 'edible' or 'inedible',
> 'to be done' or 'not to be done',
> 'suitable for love-making' or 'not
> suitable for love-making' (*gamyam/agamyam*).[2863] Nor
> should he think in terms of 'merit'
> or 'ill', 'heaven' nor 'release'.
> The yogi should remain with a composed
> mind, the embodiment of Innate Bliss
> alone".[2864]

Tantrism thus clearly assumes a very different relation to ordinary given and corrupt embodiment than other forms of Buddhism we have examined; it is no surprise, then, if we find

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2861 George, *Caṇḍamahāroṣaṇa Tantra* 78-79.

2862 Note that almost all of the most disgusting things possible are closely related to the human body.

2863 Cf. 66: "Mother, daughter, sister, niece,/ and any other female relative, as/ well as a female musician, Brāhman,/ sweeper, dancer, washerwoman, and/ prostitute; holy woman, yoginī, and/ ascetic as well -// Or whatever other he may receive/ with a woman's figure: these he/ should serve in the proper way/ without making any distinction."

2864 George, *Caṇḍamahāroṣaṇa Tantra* 79.

correspondingly novel forms of ideal embodiment, like the Buddhas and *bodhisattvas* who famously appear in (particularly Tibetan) iconography as ithyphallic, or as bloodthirsty killers soaked in gore. Any Buddha embodied as, in Ronald Davidson's memorable phrase, "a killer divinity with a permanent erection",[2865] bears clear implications for the history of ideal embodiments, which I need not spell out here, but which surely would warrant further examination in the context of the larger history of ideas about embodiments and for their implications for that history. Indeed, I would argue that any history of those ideas that does not give adequate consideration to such Tantric ideas, including this one, is thereby incomplete.

A possibly related area in which we might well also find significant (and sometimes perhaps rather subtle) developments in the ongoing working-out of broad themes in the problematic of Buddhist embodiment is in Chan/Zen.[2866] Chan, too, seems at least in some aspects to suggest a very radically immanentalist vision of ideal embodiment that may, in some sense, shun "ideals" entirely, and argue that the given, ordinary fleshly body of birth, corruption and death is nothing less *than* the ideal. To give merely a couple of examples: (1) In modern Sōtō Zen discourse, the notion fairly regularly recurs that Dōgen's 道元 (1200-1253) *shikan taza* (只観打座, that a practitioner of *zazen* must "concern [himself/herself] only with sitting") means, roughly, that to sit in *zen* is to be the Buddha".[2867] This understanding seems to emphasise, in a

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[2865] Davidson, *Social History*, 90. Davidson says this of Śiva, but it applies equally well to Tantric deities.

[2866] I first encountered the very thought-provoking comparison between Dōgen Zen and Tantra when studying under Carl Bielefeldt in classes I attended at Harvard in 2000-2001. However, while I want to acknowledge the debt I owe Prof. Bielefeldt for this general idea, I confess that I only remember the outline of the comparison as he suggested to us, and my particular application of it here may not accurately reflect anything he tried to teach us.

[2867] I have so far been unable to trace this dictum to any specific phrase in Dōgen himself. To give a single example in the modern era, Sawaki Kōdō 沢木興道 reflects this understanding when he says, "[To practise] *zazen* is to become the Buddha. Thus, if we are practising *zazen* right here, just that in and of itself is becoming the Buddha." 坐禅が成仏である。だから此処で坐禅して居ると、其の儘それが成仏である; Sawaki, *Zendan* 303.

manner similar to Tantric *ji shen cheng fo*, that a correct ritual disposition of the body makes it an efficacious vessel for full Buddhahood, without any need for other transformation. (2) To give another example, when we are told that the true person of no-self etc. is a "dried up shit-stick" or "a dried-up turd" (乾屎橛, Ch. *gan shijüe,* Jpn. *kanshiketsu*), we are surely also being presented with an in-your-face assertion of the most radically immanentalist version of embodiment imaginable. Not only is it conceivable for the contents of full realisation to be embodied in the ordinary flesh, but they even inhere in the most despicable by-products of its ongoing decay.

If there is some basis to this observation that both Tantra and Chan may be run through with these signs of a more radically immanentalist turn in the ways they conceive of the possibilities for embodiment of buddhahood in this world, then this correlation between them raises a further question that perhaps would not necessarily be as trenchant in the examination of either system in isolation: What was it about this later period of Buddhist history that might account for this common turn towards more radically immanent embodiment of Buddhism than we see anywhere earlier (at least in the materials through to the fifth century studied here)? Even if we do not take the question to this level of generality, further, I believe that even these relatively superficial observations are enough to suggest that there is much in Tantric and Chan discourse and practice surrounding the body that is new, and that the study of notions of embodiments in both contexts will contribute an important chapter to the history of such ideas in Buddhism as a whole.

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In closing these comments pointing out directions for future research that strike me as most pressing and potentially most fruitful, I will turn my attention to two final avenues of research which, in not being confined to Buddhism, are not particularly related to any specific historical period in the development of body doctrine in the Buddhist context.

6.2.14 The comparison of the problematic of embodiment in Buddhism with the same problematic in other contexts: bodies of Christ; Cartesian "mind-body dualism"

In the General Introduction to this dissertation, when I introduced the largest philosophical posits that undergird my work this dissertation, I suggested that comparison is the inevitable and proper working method of intellectual history and the interpretation of ideas (§1.3.2), and that the ultimate goal of intellectual history pursued on the grounds of comparison and reference, such as I there propounded, is the construction of a less parochial philosophy (§1.3.3). It is only natural, given these convictions, that I should believe that an ultimate research agenda for the study of materials like those analysed in the present doctrine should be their comparison with comparable ideas in other cultural and historical contexts, in the attempt to better determine, as I suggested in the General Introduction should be possible from the comparative study of the responses of various philosophical, religious and cultural systems to the same underlying problematics, the nature and full dimensions of the problematic of embodiment as it confronts us all as human beings.

Such comparative study, however, can only hope to be successful if it is based upon an adequate, not to say rich, characterisation of the ideas compared in their genuine complexity and the fullness of their range. However, as I have just argued in surveying avenues that are as yet largely unexplored in the study of the problem of embodiments in Buddhism, we are not yet in possession of anything like an adequate characterisation of the Buddhist side of any

potential comparison. For that reason, detailed exploration of such comparisons might yet be premature.

Such comparison might, of course, be pursued to our profit against ideas of embodiment in any number of other contexts: some examples that spring to my (admittedly limited) mind are ideas in Chinese religions other than Buddhism, especially Daoism; *yoga*; and later alchemical systems as they bear on the transformation of the body. Here, however, beyond pointing out what I consider to be the great importance of such comparative work in general, I will only offer some brief comments on two points of comparison to which I have given some further thought, and what strikes me as the likely significance or lessons of each.

The first such point of comparison is Christianity. In particular, as I argue in more detail in Appendix 4 to this dissertation, the ideas we find there about various "bodies" of Christ, or dimensions of Christ's embodiment, are powerful independent evidence that the problematic of embodiment, and particularly the notion of the embodiment of the divine, cannot simply be a quirk of the Buddhist imagination, but must rather reflect some significant dimension of a common human situation or problem encountered independently by both traditions. In addition, I argue, this comparison can serve, in the present case, to elucidate aspects of the overall spectrum of positions in Buddhism that would remain unclear if we confined our attention to the Buddhist case alone: that Buddhism has a centre of gravity further to the docetistic and gnostic end of the spectrum than Christianity, for instance; that the mode in which divine power (taking this term as an equally apt provisional label for buddhahood or Christ) intervenes in the world to do its work of salvation remains correspondingly relatively timeless/ahistorical, and its modes of embodiment relatively flexible and incidental, in contrast to the centrality for Christianity of the full embodiment of Christ as man and his sacrificial,

gruesomely fleshly death on a certain occasion at Golgotha; and so on. Thus, the case of the comparison with Christianity, which I certainly do not hold is important because of any supposed greater importance of Christianity than other religious systems, is useful as an object lesson in the potential dual fruits of comparison in (1) the independent evidence provided of a common underlying problematic; and (2) the assistance it gives us in pinpointing the specificities of the Buddhist response to that problematic.[2868]

A second fruitful point of comparison is with the philosophy of Descartes, and in particular, the way Descartes handles the famous "mind-body" problem. I have attempted to work through this comparison to a first approximation in other unpublished work not included in this dissertation, and I believe that it is already possible to see that this comparison leads in directions some scholars might find surprising. First, I hold that the Buddhist preoccupation with the problematic of embodiment, which I suggested in my General Introduction here (§1.3.4) is by definition the problem of a sentient being in a mind, shows that, contrary to the essentialising, polarised stereotypes conjured up by some exaggeratedly relativistic scholars,[2869]

[2868] Interested readers are urged to consult Appendix 4 for an attempt to illustrate in more detail the way these methodological lessons follow from this comparison.

[2869] For several variations on this same fundamental stereotyping claim, see e.g. the following contributions to Kasulis, Ames and Dissanayake, *Self as Body in Asian Theory and Practice*: Thomas Kasulis, xiv-xv ; Descartes is the "patriarch" of a "modern Western tradition" of dualism, xvi; 301-302. John M. Koller, 45, 47. Roger T. Ames, 159-164. Frits Staal, 67; citing Ryle's "ghost in the machine" line, 71. To give only one example, though a particularly striking and vexing one, Roger Ames's claims about a supposed Chinese mind-body "polarity", which he contrasts to the Western "dualism" and holds solves many of the problems of the latter, are part of a more general and to my mind very tendentious claim, too complex to refute here, that Chinese thought differs from Western in the more general and fundamental respect that it works with such "polarities", as opposed to our stark "dualisms" of "radical separation", 159. At a more local level, this "polaristic" set in Chinese thought obviates the specific difficulties with mind-body that are found by contrast in the West: "In the polar metaphysics of the classical Chinese tradition, the correlative relationship [! *sic*!] between the psychical and the somatic militated against the emergence of the mind/body problem. It was not that the Chinese thinkers were able to 'reconcile' this dichotomy; rather, it did not arise," 163. Ames draws support for his arguments from arguments from the always shaky ground of etymology (of Chinese words) and quite apart from a number of other objections that can be raised against these arguments, it is simply astonishing to see the selective blindness with which he employs them. For example, he suggests that the fact that in Chinese, "qualitative modifiers that we usually associate with matter do double duty. . . to characterise both the

the mind-body problem is not a culturally specific quirk of the West, introduced at a particular moment in our history by the perverse alienated imagination of René Descartes. Rather, it is a common problematic confronted, *mutatis mutandis,* even by these very different philosophical and religious projects in mutually very remote contexts. What is required, therefore, rather than simplistic analysis in terms of stereotyped contrasts between essentialised visions of the Buddhist and Cartesian terms of this comparison, is an analysis after the method of the analysis just suggested for the Christian case, also, which proceeds by first (1) identifying the outline of the common problematic as it appears in both systems, and only thereafter, and against this background, goes on to (2) consider the significant differences in the specific responses to that common problematic on either side of the comparison.

When we proceed in this manner, I believe, it is possible to see that however they are presented in simplified characterisations at second or third hand, the actual ideas of Descartes himself, as found in seminal works such as the *Meditations, Principles of Philosophy, Discourse on Method* and key letters, have surprising affinities to Buddhism as represented, say, by fundamentals of practice and the analysis encapsulated in the fivefold *skandha* model. First, it can be shown that

physical and the psychical" is somehow linked to this specially Chinese non-dualism, ignoring the fact that almost all words for psychological qualities and states in English, too (or any other language, for that matter), are derived by metaphor from adjectives more primarily describing physical phenomena (e.g. "bright", "down", "broad-minded", "lofty" intellect, "petty", "crabby"; the list could be expanded *ad infinitum*). Ames even goes on to acknowledge that there are such metaphors in "Western languages", but explains them away with the hand-waving suggestion that they are "less pervasive" (on what measure?) and "might hark back to a pre-dualistic interpretation of person", 163; which raises the question of when, if Western thought was not always dualistic, it became so, and how, and therefore, of the depth of his celebrated "fundamental" differences between Western and Chinese assumptions. Similarly, he makes much of the "speculated etymological association" between English "body" and Old High German *botahha* "tub", "vat", "cask" etc. ("hence, the expression, a 'tubby' person"! 164), which for him confirms our predilection for the notion of mind as a contents in body as a container; somehow, however, he fails to observed that Ch. *ti* 體 "body", which he also selectively etymologises as his Muse dictates as integrally related to *li* 禮 "ritual", is also therefore related more primarily to 豊 "a ritual *vessel*" (note, of course, that the *Shuo wen* ascribes only phonetic and not semantic significance to this component as it appears in 體; but the point here is that association with "vessel" was as available for Ames in the case of Chinese *ti* as it was for the "speculative" derivation of "body" from *botahha,* but he only picked up on it in one case and not the other).

the mind-body dualism in Descartes is not a given, nor a starting point for analysis, but a meditative achievement that ensues only upon cultivation and ascesis. Second, the model represented by this mind-body dualism as such a philosophical or cultivational attainment exists alongside a less well-observed actual anthropology in Descartes, and this anthropology is surprisingly close (surprisingly, that is, if we begin from stereotypical East-West dichotomies) to the fivefold *skandha* model. These suggest a third twofold conclusion, which in the nature of the case is very difficult to prove: (1) that there is strictly *nothing* in Buddhism, at least early Buddhism with its strict ineffabilism about the real and ideal (a trait evinced far more broadly that just in application to ideas of embodiment), to correspond to "mind" or "spirit" as Descartes, which means that we cannot take the coherence in multiplicity of the fivefold *skandha* model as a sign of some supposed "transcendence of the mind-body split" in allegedly Cartesian terms; and (2) that the most significant difference between even Descartes, that hoary granddaddy of a supposedly special Western mind-body alienation, and Buddhism, the frequent darling of romanticisers of radically alternative Asian "worldviews", is perhaps one of rhetorical/expository strategy[2870] rather than substance. In other words, what Descartes calls "mind", and seeks to free from the trammels and obscurity of body by dint of his *Meditations,* Buddhism may simply refuse to name, without that stubborn ineffabilism necessarily meaning that such an instance, ineffable as it may be, is ruled out of court.

Obviously, any persuasive argument in favour of these claims would have to go much further than these few comments, and I intend to pursue this particular research direction myself in future work. For present purposes, I hope merely to have said enough to suggest that the problematic of embodiment in Buddhism is a valid point of comparison with the mind-body

[2870] Without going into too much detail here, I am thinking of the kinds of characterisations of Buddhist exposition that have been advanced recently, each in their own way, by Thanissaro Bhikkhu, "Not-Self Strategy"; Albahari, "Against No-*Ātman* Theories"; Lindtner, "From Brahmanism to Buddhism".

problem in Descartes, and to indicate that such a comparison, pursued along the lines of the methodological premises and resultant comparative method I envisage here, could cast new light not only on the Buddhist but also the Cartesian side of the comparison.

More generally, as I hope to have at least suggested by these brief comments about Christian ideas of the bodies of Christ and the Cartesian mind-body dualism as case studies, comparison with the general problematic of embodiment in other historically and culturally remote contexts will ultimately be an important component of any effort to arrive at an adequate understanding of Buddhist ideas about embodiment and what they really mean.

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As the totality of these suggestions for future research will suggest clearly, I do not consider the present dissertation to have done more than clear a little of the ground for the study of the very large topic comprised by the problematic of embodiment in Buddhism as a whole. It will also be apparent that neither I nor any other single individual can realistically hope to tackle all of the dimensions of the problem, and unfortunately, I do not intend to pursue all of the topics listed above myself, even in the remote future. I can only hope, therefore, that this dissertation might spur other scholars to take up dimensions of the problem, and that the general approach to the problem for which I have tried to argue will at least provide a better starting point for the identification of such topics of study than has previous been available.

Even the asking of questions can be a useful exercise in delineating the larger dimensions of a topic, however, and this exercise in identifying future avenues for further research should also

have served as a useful corrective to the necessary partial focus of the body of this dissertation. As such, it also serves well to introduce the next and final section of these General Conclusions, in which I will attempt to offer some comment on the interpretation and significance of the ideas of embodiment we have touched upon here.

6.3 Interpretative essay: Towards the consideration of some more general implications of the history of Buddhist ideas about the body

". . . that is the question:
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
And, by opposing, end them. To die, to sleep, --
No more, and by a sleep to say we end
The heartache and the thousand natural shocks
That flesh is heir to – 'tis a consummation
Devoutly to be wished . . ."

Hamlet III.i.58-66.[2871]

The words Shakespeare puts in Hamlet's mouth here certainly differ quite significantly from the Buddhist ideas whose history has preoccupied us here, in the cosmological and religious assumptions that inform them. And yet, it seems to me, a common problem clearly lies behind the differences in the conceptual filters that cultural interposes between that problem and the human mind, be that mind Buddhist or Elizabethan.

For centuries on end, Buddhist thinkers too had their "conscience" pricked by the horns of the same dilemma that wracks the mind of the emblematic Danish prince: whether it is "nobler in the mind" to "shuffle off this mortal coil" and thereby their "quietus make ", or rather to "bear" a full catalogue of woes that would do any Pāli conspectus of *dukkha* proud ("the whips and scorns of time,/ Th'oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely,/ The pangs of disprized love, the law's delay,/ The insolence of office, and the spurns/ That patient merit of th'unworthy takes . . .").[2872] Indeed, one of the largest dynamics running through the history we have traced here sees Buddhist discourse gradually move, at least in what it says overtly,

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[2871] Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor, eds., *William Shakespeare: The Complete Works* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), 754.

[2872] *Hamlet,* III.i.69-77; *Complete Works* 754.

from prizing the former to prizing the latter. The earliest Pāli Buddhism, with which we began, quite unequivocally rejects the prospect of "suffering . . . slings and arrows", and champions the outright "shuffling off" of the "mortal coil", as Shakespeare so vividly calls the fetter of the body. By the time of the Mahāyāna ideals with which this dissertation somewhat arbitrarily ends, the noblest (*ārya*) is by contrast he who, by definition, is willing to "fardels bear", to "grunt and sweat under" not just one but a million successive "weary lives" – the *apratiṣṭhita* Buddha/*bodhisattva,* who in his Janus-faced being is the very embodiment of the ideal and problematic of immanence, partaking equally of *nirvāṇa* and *saṃsāra.*

In this dissertation, I have repeatedly characterised this long shift as a gradual emergence of an overtly effabilist and eventually fully kataphatic pole in the discourse of embodiments.[2873] This long and thoroughgoing sea-change in ideas of embodiment raises several larger questions. In this interpretative essay, I will merely point to some directions in which I think some such questions might profitably be explored, and explore some partial explanations of aspects of those larger questions. The comments I offer below should be taken at best as speculative hints at considerations to which only extensive further work will be able to do justice.

6.3.1 Conceptions of embodiment and the "antinomy of immanence"

The shift to effabilism and kataphasis with regard to ideal embodiments seems to be part of a larger shift in the direction of effabilism and then kataphasis that characterises the early and middle Mahāyāna as a whole. This broader effabilism is surely related in turn to a growing emphasis on immanence in the Mahāyāna. As I put it in the General Introduction to this essay, effabilism is to language as immanence is to things; an immanent divine is more amenable to positive description in worldly terms. Insofar as buddhahood, the "absolute" etc. is immanent

[2873] See the definitions of these terms above at n. 39-42.

(e.g. *nirvāṇa* is *saṃsāra,* the *bodhisattva* walks the tightrope of *apratiṣṭhitanirvāṇa* and is in both at once, etc.), that is, insofar as it is tangible and genuinely present in the world, it is in that degree amenable to expression in the terms of worldly discourse. It becomes in some degree effable, and effabilism, and eventually kataphasis, is a plausible, comprehensible outcome.

With this increased emphasis on immanence to which effabilism and then kataphasis is linked, however, comes the "antimony of immanence". By this phrase, I have referred to the impasse inevitably set up as soon as a system of religious thought or practice proposes a transcendent ideal as the goal toward which mundane beings should strive, or to which they can hope to be liberated. Any such conception requires that the transcendent be accessible at some point from within the mundane, that is, requires some point of *immanence*. At the same time that it is absolutely necessary for salvation to transcendence to be possible, however, immanence also undermines transcendence, since it taints the transcendent with the worldly exactly insofar as it makes the transcendent accessible from within the world. Thus cloven along the faultline between the two mutually exclusive contraries it unites within itself, the category of immanence comprises a perpetually unstable tension that religious thought must perpetually renegotiate. Each new attempt at a solution, precisely insofar as it manages to figure a genuine immanence, reinstantiates the ineluctable problem; and thus the dance goes on.

Effabilistically and especially kataphatically conceived ideal embodiments[2874] comprise a clear and particularly forceful instantiation of this "antinomy of immanence".[2875] In this dissertation,

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[2874] See esp. n. 42 on what I mean by referring to a mode of embodiment as effabilist, ineffabilist, apophatic or kataphatic.

[2875] In different terms, John Makransky has anticipated the link I draw here between aspects of the problematic of embodiment and the problem of immanence in his arguments that *trikāya* doctrine is a key expression of the Mahāyāna doctrine of *apratiṣṭhitanirvāṇa.* He further regards *apratiṣṭhitanirvāṇa* as central to the Mahāyāna as a whole, in a manner reminiscent of my claim that the Mahāyāna is

I assume that the body, or embodiment, is by definition[2876] a tangible form in which a sentient being is present or presenced in the world to sentient beings, most typically to other sentient beings, but perhaps, also, in some significant senses, to itself. The body is also usually a tangible form in which the sentient being undergoes the forces of worldly (physical and, in Buddhism, moral) causality. If a Buddha is utterly transcendent, however, or indeed identical to the transcendent in his very being, the notion of his embodiment is itself riven by the antinomy of immanence, as can be seen quite forcefully in the disjunction between these two aspects of embodiment in his case.

On the one hand, the Buddha must be embodied in order to be present to the beings he must save. On the other hand, this embodiment exposes buddhahood to the fundamental contradiction in terms posed by the absurd idea that a Buddha, who is understood to be utterly free in all respects, could be subject to any worldly conditions or forces (buddhahood is *asaṃskṛta,* characterised by *vaśitā* etc.). Any form of embodiment for buddhahood, therefore, will be unstable, an uneasy compromise between mutually exclusive and equally imperative considerations. This is the way the "antinomy of immanence" works itself out in particular application to the specific problematic of embodiment of buddhahood, and it seems clear that it is a major driver of ongoing doctrinal innovation in this sphere. The antinomy of immanence ensures that any conception of the embodiment of buddhahood will ultimately be inadequate and require, or at least leave room for, further conceptual jockeying one way or another. This underlying tension and the resultant dialectical jockeying is one important basic dynamic driving the history we have surveyed in this dissertation.

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characterised by a new emphasis on immanence itself. See *Buddhahood Embodied,* infra, but especially 85-87 and Ch. 13.

[2876] See §1.3.4.

6.3.2 The gradual emergence of effabilist-kataphatic conceptions of embodiment as part of a larger effabilist-immanentalist turn in Buddhist history

One fundamental characteristic of the history of the problematic of embodiment in Buddhism is thus that notions of embodiment perpetually teeter on the knife-edge of this antinomy, tipping now this way, now that, but never really able to find a stable position on which to settle. If this is the case, however, we must naturally ask ourselves why the whole field of possible positions is not equally instantiated from the very outset of the tradition. Why would it be the case, if there is truly such a thing as an antinomy of immanence that pulls equally strongly both ways, that Buddhism took so long to come to the more immanent pole, and therefore to the conception of more effabilist-kataphatic modes of ideal embodiment?

It should be clear, from various comments above, that I consider this question to be part and parcel of a very large question in the history of Buddhist ideas. Why did Buddhism begin with a more ineffabilist stance in general? Why, having begun from that stance, did it gradually shift, in a very long arc of development that may reach through the early Mahāyāna and well beyond to later developments in Tantra and aspects of Chan, to admitting more and more robust forms of effability and then kataphasis along a very wide front?

This is a very large and complex question, and a full answer could conceivably involve an exploration of the interrelations of multiple factors, including: the structures and vicissitudes of various institutions; political dynamics; cultural variation across multiple parts of the complex Buddhist world; the biographies, personalities and ideas of individual Buddhist thinkers; and the real nature of human being in the world and the philosophical problems to which they give rise. Some of the pertinent factors may also be irrecoverably lost to use in the

shifting sands of history. I strongly emphasise, therefore, that the speculations that follow are intended as nothing more than a preliminary exploration of one possible contributing factor to this complex dynamic.

With these caveats, however, I think it is possible to say that at least part of the reason Buddhism gradually comes over time to admit more effabilism and kataphasis may lie in the changing relationship of Buddhism to other contemporaneous systems and ideas, and a kind of developmental systemic logic arising from the conjunction of this overall ecology of conceptual systems and the range of conceptual possibilities available.

To forestall possible misunderstanding, I should say before beginning the following analysis that I do not mean to imply by it that any developments in Buddhist ideas of embodiment were necessary or inevitable. When I speak of a "logic" at work in the development of these ideas, for example, or when I speak of certain outcomes as "expected" and "comprehensible", etc., I merely mean rather something like this. We can see that the confrontation of certain configurations of ideas with certain features of the complex reality of the world (including realities of language and thought as well as our physical and social situation and being) creates certain conceptual pressures and opportunities. In light of those pressures and opportunities, it is unsurprising that at least some thinkers will have pursued certain basic conceptual options, and it is also unsurprising that at least some portion of the tradition will have accepted and propagated the resulting ideas. None of this, however, is to say that any individual members of the tradition, or even the tradition as a whole in a given period, *had* to adopt the conceptual options in question, let alone that the "developmental logic" I trace could predict the details of the positions elaborated. This developmental logic only operated in combination with the complex mix of other factors already acknowledged above, and in particular, one important

component of this mix must have been the individual creativity of the thinking agents who received, transmitted and created the tradition. It would therefore be folly to think we could ever elaborate an *inevitabilist* logic of any intellectual history.

With these provisos, then, what do I mean when I claim that a developmental logic is discernible that explains in part the hard-line ineffabilism of early Buddhism and its later gradual turn to effabilism and immanentalism?

It seems clear that at the beginning of its history, Buddhism is an oppositional system of practice and discourse. As such, it appropriates and spins the terms of the mainstream Brahminical discourse to which it is opposed and which forms its primary context, and is defined against that larger mainstream context.[2877] At this phase of Buddhist history, it seems to me, we must conceive of Buddhism as a part of a larger overall conceptual ecology which also incorporates this mainstream background. That is to say that in setting itself up oppositionally, and in inevitably implying the looming presence of that pervasive background in the very terms of its discourse, Buddhism is what we might call a "parasitic" system, the meaning of whose terms are dependent upon the system of meaning serving as "host". In this context, Buddhism can adopt a posture of radical ineffabilism because the work of effabilism is already done for it by its rhetorical targets – by the broadly Brahminical/Upaniṣadic systems and discourses whose terms it borrows, and which it can assume as a starting point in all who come to it.

[2877] We might even generalise and expect that any new system of ideas must always necessarily begin its career from such an oppositional position, and define itself over and against a cultural context much larger than it is.

Over time, however, core components of this initial conceptual ecology shift and fall away, so that the very ground shifts under the feet of Buddhism, and it must adjust its footing accordingly.

First, when any conceptual or religious system thrives and grows for as long and on as large a scale as Buddhism did, it is an expected and comprehensible development in that it eventually gathers up into itself more and more of the functions of the mainstream. People are born into it rather than converting, such that it can no longer assume its members bring the same sets of baggage with them from outside. It is also progressively enriched and diversified by the increasing number of adherents and transmitters who contribute to its overall repertoire of ideas, even unwittingly. It becomes more and more the primary frame of reference for the determination of any significant questions for people who live within it. In other words, various pressures are exerted upon it to transform from a particular and targeted conceptual technology for addressing a special set of concerns into a general worldview.

Meanwhile, on the "host" side of the initial setup, change is inevitable also. Ideas which originally comprised prime targets for the oppositional or appropriative rhetoric of the new system may fall into desuetude, so that the oppositional ideas find themselves functioning in a vacuum. Further, where a new system attains to very massive cultural weight, as was the case with Buddhism, such developments may be precipitated or intensified by the very success of the new system itself, which might shift the very meaning of the terms they appropriated even in the reception of their original contexts, or persuade people to abandon the original terms entirely. In short, entire contexts for an initial articulation of the new system may fade and fail. With those changes in context, the very meaning of key terms in the system itself may be thrown into crisis.

A further historical development that begins in the early period of Buddhist history is the geographic dispersal of Buddhism, beginning with the Aśokan missions and only accelerating over subsequent centuries as Buddhism spread beyond the subcontinent into Central Asia, China, and insular South Asia. This expansion would also have contributed to and exacerbated this decay of key contexts that early Buddhism could have implicitly assumed. As Buddhism thus moved into a kaleidoscopic range of cultural contexts, it would not have been able to assume any stable set of contextual features against which to articulate itself. An expected and comprehensible result of this development would be for Buddhism, once more, to gather up within itself functions initially "out-sourced" to its larger cultural context, in order that the meanings generated by interaction with them would be transportable as a whole to its new cultural destinations.

To summarise, then, it is possible that the interrelated ineffabilist "purism" of early Buddhism had its original meaning by virtue of an oppositional and parasitic position vis-à-vis mainstream Brahminism/Upaniṣadism.[2878] Over time, however, in virtue of dynamics like those just described, Buddhism would have found itself more and more the main or even sole occupant of larger conceptual and religious arenas all of its own. It would thereby have been less and less able to rely on the implicit collaboration of its original context in the production of its meanings; less and less able to assume any particular effabilist preconceptions or propositions in the minds of its audience. This shift in context, and the resultant shortage of

[2878] I emphasise once more that I intend this exploration of these factors of overall historical developments as a *partial* interpretation of that history. I certainly do not mean to imply, or even countenance, a view that the transcendentalist ineffabilism of early Buddhism was somehow the *product* of its "parasitic" status vis-à-vis Brahmanism and Upaniṣadism. Quite to the contrary, precisely in this stance, Buddhism also stakes out a radical and substantial position in relation to substantial religious and philosophical issues. We must also take the contents of that position seriously as truth claims in order to properly appreciate them and account for them.

ambient effabilism, would have predisposed people to misinterpret the terms of the original teaching, leading to an obvious problem in the terms of traditional Buddhist analysis: an audience fed only a diet of straight ineffabilism could fall fairly immediately into nihilism (*apavāda*).

In this situation, one workable and coherent response would be to bring "in-house" the effabilist functions that were originally "outsourced" to other systems. We can conceive of the useful results of this process in two ways. In direct terms, it would supply effabilist expressions of the ideal where they were needed. In indirect terms, this development would have restored the overall ecological balance comprised by the total assemblage of multiple points of view. Thus, the introduction of a native Buddhist effabilism would be a logically comprehensible consequence of a growing effabilist vacuum external to Buddhism, and a corresponding gradual creep towards an unbalanced monopoly of ineffabilism within it.

Such a process need not have been entirely driven by conscious decisions on the part of the authors of the new, more effabilist positions. That is, we need not imagine that Buddhist thinkers were gifted with an omniscient insight into the intellectual-historical dynamics of their context, or a perfect canniness and skill in elaborating appropriate strategies in response to those dynamics, in order for this developmental logic to have been at work. To some degree, increased effabilism simply becomes an element of the overall conceptual ecology that is in undersupply, and ideas that meet the need so created have better opportunities to gain currency.

On the other hand, we should also recognise that the process could in part indeed have been driven by the conscious intellectual work of deliberate agents. It is certainly not *prima facie*

implausible that learned Buddhist thinkers and accomplished Buddhist practitioners could have perceived an increased danger of nihilism in the communities they moved among, and endeavoured to redress the balance in their own creative doctrinal work. The problem of the degree to which this development was deliberate or conscious is therefore complex.

Regardless of the degree to which these developments were blind shifts in the aggregate of a large tradition or the brilliant innovations of insightful minds, we should note carefully that on this analysis, the "effabilist turn" is possibly just as much a matter of expressive strategy, as necessarily a sign of shifts in fundamental doctrinal or metaphysical posits. It is for this reason that I talk of "ineffabilism" and "effabilism", and later, within effabilism, of apophasis and kataphasis. Such rhetorical labels are matters of expository strategy, as opposed to metaphysical labels like "nihilism", "positive monism" etc.

This basic approach to the terms in which doctrine is articulated has been anticipated by Buddhist discourse itself. Buddhism itself has often emphasised that the articulation of (approximations of) truth within the fold of the world is a matter of situated strategy, and not a matter of a quest for eternal formulations that will supposedly be equally valid for all contexts. Until quite recently, however, modern Buddhist Studies, by contrast to traditional Buddhism, has recognised too little that Buddhist doctrinal and intellectual history may sometimes be a history of such strategic, rhetorical developments in a pragmatically oriented discourse, as much as a history of radically heterogeneous substantial positions. As a corrective to such reductionist and literalist readings of the texts, we need to recognise that the apparent Mahāyāna shift towards greater immanentalism does not *necessarily* represent an actual shift in underlying metaphysical posits, but possibly represents a contextualised adjustment in the range of rhetorical strategies deployed to try and express or inculcate the same basic position.

Obviously, the introduction of this second hermeneutic possibility complicates the work of interpretation. It may be difficult, or even impossible, to reliably distinguish a shift in underlying position from a shift in expository strategy on the basis of evidence of what is *said* in the texts alone. A further part of the difficulty here springs from the fact that we must recognise that rhetorical strategy alone surely cannot ever account for *all* the difference we observe between different Buddhist positions. It is not only possible but almost inevitable that somewhere among the great panoply of ideas and positions found in Buddhist texts, we will also find substantially different positions.[2879] To suppose otherwise would be to make of Buddhism a monolithic system possible only in the pious imaginations of traditional doctors who ascribe the whole edifice to the authority of the omniscient and infallible Buddha himself.

However, none of these complications changes the fact that the Mahāyāna shift towards apparent greater immanentalism is in principle explicable as at least in part a shift in strategy, towards greater effabilism. As I have argued, this interpretation is compatible with a discernible conceptual logic at work in the overall ecology of doctrinal positions through the relevant period in Buddhist history. It is also consistent with an important thread of self-understanding in the Buddhist tradition itself, which holds that expressions of doctrine are most usually situationally targeted strategic means, to be interpreted with reference to their

[2879] Indeed, it is even likely that even a new terminology that hypothetically began as a shift in rhetorical strategy would come to be taken by some as a substantially different position, and expounded as such. Against the need I have been arguing here for recognition of the possibility that shifts in terms of discourse are strategic rather than substantial, I would also argue that we must balance a recognition of the significant ways that the Mahāyāna was indeed substantially and even radically new. Recall, for example, my characterisations of a Mahāyāna "metaphysical turn", and corresponding arguments against Paul Harrison in Ch. 4.2 that we need to be equally careful not to construct imaginary *continuities* between Mainstream and Mahāyāna, as we do not to construct "imaginary discontinuities". Once more, however, I reiterate that I am only attempting in this section of my argument to explore one aspect of an overall complex development, and do not pretend that it accounts for the entirety of the history at issue.

context and intended audience, and not in a vacuum, as purportedly equally valid for all times and places.

To bring the these general reflections back to bear upon the problem of embodiment, it seems likely to me that the gradual shift towards effabilist and eventually kataphatic conceptions of ideal embodiment is in part to be explained as a part of this much more far-reaching shift. It therefore cannot be properly understood if considered in isolation from these pervasive contextual questions. The much larger shift towards immanentalism or effabilism in the Mahāyāna turn as a whole is in part explicable as the result of the shifting balance of conceptual ecologies traced above. We can thus understand the dominance of negative-ineffabilist conceptions of modes *of embodiments* in the earlier tradition as a function of the larger position of early Buddhism, as an oppositional and parasitic system in relation to mainstream Indic religions as a whole; and the shift towards admission of more effabilist and eventually kataphatic modes *of embodiment* can be understood as one important aspect of a larger shift of Buddhism to occupy more of the centre of the overall available range of expository and doctrinal possibilities.

The gradual emergence of effabilism and kataphasis in conceptions of embodiments therefore represents the gradual Buddhist discovery or appropriation of more and more parts of the overall available spectrum of basic positions in relation to the problem of ideal embodiments. The fact that Buddhism took centuries to gradually stake out positions across the full range of this spectrum does not, in and of itself, undermine my basic contention that there *is* such an underlying spectrum of basic available possibilities. It is, rather, a reflection of a particular Buddhist history, which starts in an oppositional stance expressed in a very strong ineffabilism,

and only gradually moderates this stance, a moderation due in part to the recoverable developmental logic examined above.

6.3.3 Reinstating reference to the actual body into our interpretations of Buddhist ideas about the body

Assuming, then, for the sake of argument, the overall field of positions and ideas about embodiments as it emerged gradually over Buddhist history, I would now like to modulate to a key of analysis from which we have been quite remote for much of this dissertation. I wish to step back from historical questions altogether, and to survey the overall field of ideas about embodiments as this history has revealed it, including not just the ideas down to the fifth century analysed in detail in the body of this dissertation, but also the later ideas, especially in Tantra and Chan (§6.2.13), touched on in this General Conclusion, and also the light I hope is thrown on these ideas by the hints of comparison I have offered (§6.2.14, Appendix 4). In other words, I would like to stop looking at the trees, and look at the wood as a whole.

If, as I have argued, ideas of embodiments comprise a field that is structured by poles of given and ideal, on one axis, and transcendence and immanence, on another axis, the important question is this: What is the significance of this field as a whole? Without a coherent answer to this question, I hold, we cannot arrive at an adequate understanding of any of the individual doctrines or positions situated within that field.

As I already suggested as a general principle in the General Introduction to this dissertation (§1.3.1), I hold that ultimately, questions of the important species to which this question belongs cannot be answered without an assumption of reference. In other words, we must eventually turn away from the analysis of the internal structure and relations of systems of

concepts among themselves, and refer them to the human reality they attempt to describe and come to grips with.

However, studies of Buddha-bodies to date have arguably fallen down on this score also, in that they have missed entirely the most important referent of the ideas they study, and rather, interpreted the ideas in terms of a set of secondary or even mistaken referents. Though to put it so bluntly may sound fatuous or truistic, we need to understanding ideas about embodiments first and foremost as claims *about embodiment,* that is, as referring *to real bodies.* In other words, we have to take the corporeal conceit *corporeally.* Obvious though this seems, in all the secondary literature to date on the bodies of the Buddha, I have never seen any signs of an attempt to think through the ideas under study in these terms. Rather, the field has been animated by an apparent assumption that these ideas can be interpreted, somewhat glibly, as mere symbols, figures of speech, or metaphors. The emphasis is immediately and unthinkingly on the question of what idea, *other than embodiment per se,* is supposed to be conveyed by this or that body, e.g. by the various bodies of the *trikāya* trinity – *svābhāvikakāya* "represents" the essential nature of a Buddha as he is to himself; *sāṃbhogikakāya* is "a figure for" the Buddha as he teaches advanced *bodhisattvas,* and so on. Conversely, no scholar ever seems to have asked what it might be like to really be embodied in such a body, or to really believe that such embodiment was a real possibility and a goal to be striven for.

The problem with this approach is that it arguably misses the entire basic point of the very notion of embodiment *per se,* in a status that it has entirely prior to the specification of this or that vision of a particular form of body. We need to ask ourselves: What is different about these ideas if they are expressed in terms of the Buddha's *body,* and not his essence, or his nature, or his capacity for various actions, or his qualities, or whatever? In other words: Why would the

thinkers and authors behind our texts have settled on the "conceit" of embodiment, in particular, and why would this conceit have been powerful enough to have attained such extremely broad currency and range? What difference, in short, does a *body* make? So far as I can see, we can only begin to consider this question by bringing Buddhist claims about embodiments home to their proper point of reference, i.e. through understanding them as claims *about being in a body* in some sense that is commensurable and coterminous with the sense in which we understand that proposition as it applies to our own life and being.

When we reinstate this primary corporeal reference of the corporeal "conceit", we are arguably forced to understand the whole range of ideas about embodiments in Buddhism as something substantially more than a set of mere ideas, or symbols, or a "conceit". Indeed, it seems that this is precisely the point of using the language of embodiment. We are not to imagine that liberation is merely a matter of cognitively understanding a set of abstract propositions – not even, or especially, these propositions about the body! – but rather, that liberation only comes to those who can *embody* significant truths, that is, who can "incorporate" them into their very being; who can inhabit them as their most intimate person; who can, conversely, render themselves guises of those truths "incarnate".[2880]

When we clear this blind spot, and reintroduce the primary reference to the body into our interpretation of the underlying idea of corporeality, it seems clear that prior to any of its specific visions of the precise lineaments of ideal embodiment, the overall field of Buddhist

[2880] If this is indeed the central thrust of the notion of ideal embodiments in Buddhism, then we need scarcely pause to comment on the rich irony by which Buddhist Studies has grappled with that notion for over a century without ever even noticing the true corporeality of the conceit, or feeling these ideas as claims about palpable, materially instantiated, lived experience, but has rather treated them merely as so many "ideas" among disembodied ideas.

ideas about embodiments, both given and ideal, most fundamentally makes two mutually supporting claims.

> (1) There is something fundamentally inadequate about our ordinary given embodiment. Ordinary embodiment is inadequate because it is both illusory and fallible. In other words, at its heart the problem is roughly twofold. (i) We are prey to a kind of misidentification of ourselves, as pinpointed by the notion of "the view that one is one's body/self" (*satkāyadṛṣṭi*, §2.1.1.3). (ii) Not only is the manifold embodiment to which *satkāyadṛṣṭi* mistakenly points not in fact our true being, but it can never be satisfactory, because it is finite, mortal, dependent upon numerous fickle conditions, and thereby heir to suffering.
>
> (2) We don't have to put up with this radically nasty state of being. The problem can be fixed; what we see is not what we get; given embodiment is not our only choice. *All* the visions of embodiment as it figures in the larger scheme of the salvific project that we have examined here have in common a shared understanding that liberation is *reembodiment* – from the radical *dis*embodiment in whose terms this corollary of liberation is figured in the earliest materials, through to the most radically kataphatic and immanentalist visions propounded perhaps in Tantra and Chan. In other words, it is possible for us to realise a radically different, fully adequate, utterly free and blissful embodiment, or, to put it another way, to embody complete freedom.

If we take these two interrelated Buddhist claims seriously, that is, if we understand them as referring to real-world states of embodiment, then it seems to me that we find in these claims one of the most significant sites of a potential for Buddhism to contribute something very

significant to our overall world of ideas, and to speak to current concerns. The basic Buddhist understanding seems to be that we have neither to like our given embodiment nor to lump it, but rather that we can radically "reembody" ourselves in some sense – for example in a kind of gnosis or spiritually salutary mode of knowledge. This idea, in and of itself, seems outlandish and fresh in the context of our general modern ideas about bodies, and an idea to which I can think of almost no modern parallels.

The detailed exploration of the potential for these Buddhist ideas to speak to our contemporary context, however, must await future work, work that promises to be exciting, challenging and difficult, to say the least.

6.3.4 Who or what is embodied? Buddhist ideas as one particular perspective on a general human problem of embodiment

A final significant general problem raised by the ideas we have studied here lies in the very difficult question of exactly *what or who is embodied* when we speak of embodiment.[2881] For most of this dissertation, I have attempted merely to bracket out this question – partly out of respect for Buddhist rhetorical scruples, but also out of a kind of sheer intellectual intimidation. It seems to me that the difficulty of this question is only partly determined by the particular rhetorical strategies and consequent terms of Buddhist discourse. In other dimensions, it

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[2881] Though I cannot enter into this question in any detail here, I suspect that a clue may be found in the formulation of DN 2 in articulating the "snake slough" model, from which so many of the ideas treated here seem ultimately to stem: "This my body is material, made up from the four great elements, born of mother and father, fed on rice and gruel, impermanent, liable to be injured and abraded, broken and destroyed, *and this is my consciousness which is bound to it and dependent on it;*" see §2.3.3 and n. 559. As I have already had occasion to note above, Pande holds this *kāya-viññāṇa* analysis to be older than the fivefold *skandha* model (on which, logically, *viññāṇa* is also an aspect of embodiment, rather than what is embodied); see n. 3028. I would be tempted to regard the shift from this dichotomy to *pañcaskandha* as a matter of rhetorical strategy, for which see again the papers mentioned in n. 2870. I also expect that a useful path to the exploration of this question is plotted by the thesis of Thanissaro Bhikkhu, *Mind Like Fire Unbound*.

seems to be in the very nature of the case, as can be seen not only by consideration of Descartes (and his impasses), but also by the vexed status of the question of consciousness in very recent contemporary philosophical contexts.[2882]

The difficulties into which this question so regularly leads, I suspect, are indicative of a very deep-rooted problem in being what we are; in being so "in" a body; and in understanding accurately or usefully what it is that we are, such that we are "in" that body. This is, of course, nothing more or less than the same problem of embodiment *per se,* but seen from a different perspective, in which light it may thus turn out to devolve upon the problem of the genuine nature of what is embodied, rather than the particular qualities of given embodiment. In other words, it is possible that the inadequacies of given embodiment, as so trenchantly critiqued by the Buddhist ideas we surveyed here, are not so much in the inherent properties of that embodiment in and of itself, but in the inadequacies of any embodiment with such properties *to* what it supposedly embodies.

What, then, is the nature of what or who is embodied, such that ordinary given embodiment is so inadequate to it?

If we extrapolate from the features of the various ideal embodiments Buddhism proposes as adequate to it in its more effabilist-kataphatic moments, as well as the implications of its overt critiques of given embodiments in its negative-ineffabilist beginnings, it seems that the Buddhist answer would be: the embodied cannot be captured in any set of finite worldly conditions; it is the proper heir to absolute freedom and illimitable powers. A logical part of the transcendence of worldly finitude, on this understanding, is that the trammels of language

[2882] For a representative sampling of contemporary positions on this question, see the papers collected in Shear, *Explaining Consciousness*.

are among the limited worldly conditions that cannot adequately capture the embodied. Where our descriptivist inclination is to doggedly ask, "But what is it?", therefore, Buddhism unasks that very question. It is perhaps in this fundamental shift of approach that Buddhism has the most to offer. The enduring and only ever partially modified ineffabilist stance of Buddhism declares: The way to a better mode of embodiment lies not in the quest for an accurate description of the ideal, but in an accurate insight into the nature of the problem (suffering, etc.) and its root; and the question is not so much what to *say* of your situation in the world, let alone how it would be if it were better, but what you should do about it – not so much in formulating an "answer", but in clearly discerning the problem (which discernment is perhaps answer in itself).

Another clue to a quite generally Buddhist answer to this question of what or who is embodied seems to lie in the notion of embodiment in gnosis itself. We had several occasions in this dissertation to observe that buddhahood is overtly said to be embodied in the special gnosis that constitutes it (*jñāna, bodhi* etc.) in various contexts. More generally still, we can understand this basic conception to underlie the frequent paradoxical identity or nonduality that is posited, in the enlightened state, between knower, knowing and known (*buddha, bodhi; grāhaka, grāhya; pramātṛ, pramāṇa, prameya*); between the truth as discourse (*dharma*) and truth as content or referent of that discourse (*dharmatā, dharmadhātu; tathatā, yathābhūtajñāna*); and so on. We might even argue that this is the case when Buddhism is at its most stubbornly ineffabilist, and the object, content, and knower of liberated knowledge is only delineated by the adumbration of the ongoing *reductio* ("not this, not this").

On the one hand, then, whatever the awakening of the awakened awakens to, it is nothing that can be captured by referential discourse, i.e. nothing within the fold of the world – not even

ordinary subjective experience. On the other hand, what the knower knows in that state is nothing other than *itself*, such that its liberated knowledge is therefore a pure, non-referential knowledge. Little wonder, then, that it is possible to deploy the corporeal conceit to refer to this not just as a knowing but as a *being* of what is known. In the liberated state, it seems, the knower, rather than mistakenly identifying with any alienating physical or mental instance in the world, *is* rather self-identically embodied in its true self, and since its nature is knowledge, that self-identity is a knowing (a gnosis).

We might observe, finally, that it is unlikely to be coincidental that the structure of the relation entertained by this knowing something or someone to the things of the world could also be described perfectly adequately by the notion of transcendence, for so long as the Buddhist *reductio* ("not this, not this") holds. The problem of its effability, or the kataphatic indication of the direction in which it might lie, is precisely the problem of immanence, and the antinomy of immanence is therefore its antinomy.

It seems that the most basic lesson of the Buddhist discourse of reembodiment as a concomitant of liberation, however, is that to "clearly discern" the truth outlined by these adumbrations means not (just, or even) arriving at a cognitive understanding of it, but *being* that understanding. To realise this truth is to know it "in your bones"; to *become* the truth of the problem (the *dharmatā* of all *dharmas*, viz. *dharmakāya*); to borrow the delicious ambiguity of the Chinese, to understand in the sense of to *ti* 體, i.e. to "(em)body" or "really get" it. It may be difficult to say more about this, because where we move from propositional knowledge to direct embodied knowledge, saying ends and doing begins. It is hopefully appropriate, therefore, that my attempts at analysis here fall into silence.

Appendix 1 (to Chapter 2): The relative dating of Pāli-canonical materials

The question of the relative dates of the various Pāli materials dealt with in Chapters 2 and 3 of this dissertation is complex. For this reason, I have relegated its treatment to this Appendix. To treat it in the body of the text above would have distracted too much from the main thrust of my argument, and considerations are often too complex to have been treated coherently even in the footnotes. Treating these questions in an Appendix, however, also has disadvantages, because it requires readers interested in pursuing this dimension of my argument to flip back and forth between this Appendix and the body of the text in order to keep track of the relevance of questions of dating to other aspects of the argument. I apologise for this inconvenience. In order to make reference to the relevant parts of the body of the argument, I have tried wherever possible to include detailed cross-references in the footnotes to the discussion below.

In §1.3.5 of the "Introduction" to this dissertation, I laid out the general method I have pursued in treating the complex question of relative dates of Pāli materials in this dissertation, and some methodological considerations that lie behind this choice of method. Readers are referred to that discussion. Here, then, before turning to the detailed discussion of different bodies of material in turn, I need only reiterate some caveats. I have here been reliant upon work by a number of other scholars for guidance in a part of the field where I myself lack expertise. Moreover, it seems clear from discussion of these questions by the most authoritative scholars that in the present state of the field, too little is known to be confident about conclusions about relative dating of Pāli materials in many cases. Finally, I have not been able, for logistical reasons, to consider every piece of potentially relevant evidence in every

case, though in some cases I believe my coverage of the evidence does approach the exhaustive. The discussions below should therefore be understood as provisional.

App 1.1: Materials relating to the ordinary given body in the Pāli canon (cf. Ch. 2.1)

The analysis of the ideas whose dates we consider here in Chapter 2 made use of only a sampling of canonical passages on each topic. All of the conclusions I draw below are therefore tentative, and could certainly be altered by consideration of further passages in which the same ideas feature. However, in most cases I have either referred to with material that is usually dated with relative confidence (such as the first *vagga* of DN, or the *Pātimokkha*), or else dealt with a wide enough selection of materials that I hope that the analysis below is reasonably reliable. Texts cited in the discussion of these ideas in the body of the text, but which our various secondary authorities on dating questions (primarily Pande, Norman, Kingsbury and von Hinüber) do not consider are silently omitted from the following discussion.

With those caveats in mind, I will proceed in my survey of this evidence by looking first at those ideas for which I believe there are the strongest grounds to think the idea is early, and then moving progressively towards ideas that seem somewhat later. Within each chronological stratum (I will only really use two, "early" and "late") I will proceed in the same order as the exposition above, to facilitate reference to the earlier argument. We begin, then, by considering ideas relating to given embodiments that seem most certainly very early.

App 1.1.1 The body as archetypal site of suffering (cf. §2.1.1.1)

First of all, we can dispense with the colourful torture and hell texts in support of the notion that the body as a "sensitive substance" is a central locus of suffering (*dukkha*). None of the

secondary scholars here surveyed gave much evidence supporting any solid idea of the dates of the texts.[2883]

App 1.1.2 Birth, sickness, old age and death as the epitome of suffering (cf. §2.1.1.2)

The evidence for the conception of suffering as epitomised by birth, sickness, ageing and (especially) death is mixed.[2884] I nonetheless include it here as part of the earliest stratum in part because, as I show in detail in Ch 2.2, there is a very extensive discourse in early Buddhism that characterises the attainment of the religious idea as a conquest of death, an attainment of a state of undying, etc.[2885] This discourse is certainly present in the earliest strata of the canon. This fact alone, I believe, would be evidence enough that bodily infirmity and mortal frailty is regarded as a large part of the problematic of suffering in Buddhism as early as our record can take us.

Aside from these considerations, however, there is some other evidence, if only a little, that shows that some of the passages cited above are old. The first *vagga* of SN, the *Sagāthavagga,* in which SN 10.7[2886] falls, is considered old, at least in its verse portions.[2887] Given that, for the doctrine under study, the portion of the text that interests us is the verses put in the mouth of the *yakkhī* Punabbasu's mother, this suggests that we are dealing with an old doctrine (though

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[2883] Pande and Norman do not discuss the date of MN 13, but Kingsbury assigns it to the middle stratum on the basis of his aorist tests; Kingsbury diss 236. The only criteria given (by Winternitz, Pande and Kingsbury) for the possible date of MN 129 and MN 130 are entirely doctrinal, and so useless for our purposes here; Kingsbury diss, 55; Pande 140.

[2884] This set of ideas in particular, however, is widely attested in the canon, I had no hope of being anything like exhaustive. The sample of texts I relied on is therefore especially limited in what it can show us about relative dating.

[2885] See p. 177 ff above.

[2886] See p. 98 above.

[2887] See Norman, *Pāli Lit.* 50-52.

we cannot conclude anything very firm on the basis of such vague considerations). SN 12.39 and 12.40[2888] fall in a group of three *suttas* (38-40) which treat a conception of *viññāṇa* regarded as early.[2889] Similarly, SN 12.64, "If There Is Lust"[2890] is also regarded by Pande as probably earlier than the bulk of the *Nidānasaṃyutta* in which it falls because of early conceptions of *viññāṇa,* in this case resulting in unintelligibility.[2891] DN 14[2892] is difficult to date for various reasons, but on balance I believe we can consider it relatively early.[2893]

On the other hand, a larger number of the texts treated above are identified as late for various reasons by the secondary scholars we are relying upon. MN 28[2894] is generally considered late, the strongest reason for this evaluation being that it quotes from another text (*Kakacūpama-sutta,* MN 21) by name. Pande also assigns it to a late stratum because of his judgement that the standardised list of nine meditative stages found in the text is a kind of doctrinal item that is late, and because of what Pande calls the "dictionary style" of exposition by Sāriputta on doctrinal rubrics.[2895] Norman also regards MN 28 as late, but for the different reason that the *sutta* ends with an exhortation to Sāriputta to repeat the discourse to anyone who has doubts about the Buddha: "such a sentiment seems late", Norman says simply.[2896]

[2888] See p. 99 above.

[2889] Pande 206; indeed, Pande even feels able to specify that 39 is "a step nearer the later formulation of *paṭiccasamuppāda*" than 38.

[2890] See n. 136 above.

[2891] Pande 206.

[2892] See p. 97 above.

[2893] See p. 1443 and also n. 2994. See also Kingsbury diss, 30.

[2894] See n. 129 above.

[2895] Kingsbury 43; Pande 131.

[2896] Norman 42.

MN 141[2897] is also considered late, because of its use of the "dictionary style" of exposition (once more by Sāriputta) on the Four Noble Truths.[2898] Norman, in discussing the difficulty of making the name of the *paṇṇāsa* in which the text is contained accord with the number of texts in it, further considers the possibility that this *sutta* might be an interpolation, in support of which suggestion he notes that it "seems to be no more than an early commentary on the Buddha's first sermon about the four noble truths"; this would also suggest it is late.[2899]

It seems likely that *jarāmaraṇa* as a member of the twelvefold *nidāna* schema,[2900] in particular, is not among the earliest ideas in the texts, though the evidence seems very mixed, and it is difficult here to separate evaluations of the dates of texts from (probably well-grounded) assumptions about the place of the twelvefold schema in doctrinal evolution as a whole, since Pande in particular so often uses it as a benchmark in its dating exercises. For example, DN 15 the *Mahānidāna-sutta,* is considered late, but for reasons that border on the doctrinal: it has a "scholastic bent", as Kingsbury puts it, and "delight[s] in metaphysical subtleties" (Pande).[2901] Pande opines, however, that on the whole, it is a mixture of various strata, and belongs neither to the oldest nor the youngest portion of the *nikāyas* as a whole.[2902] Against this overall evaluation must also be balanced the fact that the text contains a detailed exposition of the

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2897 See n. 129 above.

2898 Kingsbury 57, Pande 143.

2899 Norman 48.

2900 See p. 99; texts relating to this aspect of the problem, dates for which are discussed in the present paragraph, cited in n. 134, 135.

2901 Kingsbury 30, Pande 96.

2902 Pande 98.

paṭiccasamuppāda doctrine, but based upon a schema with only ten rather than twelve links; elsewhere, this feature is sometimes taken as a mark of older texts that precede the "classic" twelvefold schema.[2903] MN 1 is regarded by Pande as "uncertain", and he mentions a number of features that might lead us to regard it as either early or late according to his own criteria;[2904] the same text is assigned to a "middle" stratum by Kingsbury on the basis of his aorist tests, which could well be a function of treating as a single text something that was actually composite. MN 38, *Mahātaṇhasankhaya-sutta,* is also considered a mix of early and late material, but once more on quasi-doctrinal criteria.[2905]

Against this mixed evidence, however, some texts containing *jarāmaraṇa* as a member of the twelvefold *nidāna* analysis seem unequivocally late. In particular, the term occurs in this connection dozens of times throughout the *Nidāna-saṃyutta* (SN 2). Much of the *Nidāna-saṃyutta* as a whole is regarded as late by Pande, with some exceptions, but once more, his argument for this view is circular, being primarily because of his evaluation of the relative date of the *nidāna* schema itself, the principal subject of the *saṃyutta*. MN 115, *Bahudhātuka-sutta,* is considered late by Pande, but again because of quasi-doctrinal features, namely its detailed exposition of the *dhātu* schema.[2906] MN 138, *Uddesavibhanga-sutta* is considered late, but also on quasi-doctrinal grounds, because it foreshadows the categories of the Abhidhamma. In fact, the

[2903] See n. 2996.

[2904] Pande 159.

[2905] Pande regards the "early" part (found at the end of the text) as such because of an emphasis on practice and an absence of "scholasticism", whereas the middle "late" part of the text discusses *paṭiccasamuppāda* in a very detailed manner; Pande 45. For our purposes, sticking to the methodological principles declared above, it is better to regard it as of unknown date.

[2906] Pande 139.

entire *vagga* in which this text is included is considered late because the texts within it foreshadow Abhidhamma methods.[2907]

In sum, then, there are some good reasons for thinking that the tradition thought of death in particular, but also birth, ageing and sickness, as epitomes of suffering from very early on. There is also much evidence, however, to show the presence of this same idea in later texts. One reason for this may be that this idea was simply a fairly steady doctrinal staple throughout the canonical period, and indeed, *prima facie* and comparative considerations would lead us to expect no less. Surely, the problems of sickness and dying strike all people in all times, and are regularly a central concern of religious thought and practice. Another explanation, however, might be sought in a possible increasing tendency for the tradition to elaborate meta-labels for doctrinal categories over time. That is to say, while the *idea* of birth, ageing, sickness and death as key instances of suffering may be obvious and already present fairly early in the tradition, the *labelling* of this problem by quasi-technical compounds like *jarāmaraṇa* or *jātijarāmaraṇa* may increase over time, as the discourse of the tradition is enriched by a host of shorthand procedures for handling larger conceptual chunks as single units. (This is a phenomenon whose possible role in creating the patterns of attestation we observe we will return to below, in the cases e.g. of *sakkāya* and *kayânusati*).

App 1.1.3 Social embodiment (cf. §2.1.2)

We next turn to social embodiment, where the case, I think, is very straightforward. The text we took as our basis for the analysis of the early Buddhist attitude to ordinary given social embodiment, the *Pātimokkha,* is considered old.

[2907] Norman, *Pāli Lit.* 48.

Tradition holds that Upāli was asked by Mahākassapa about the "twofold *vinaya*" at the first council. Norman thinks that this tradition means that the *vinaya* at that time comprised only the *Pātimokkha* for monks and nuns.[2908] Its great age is also suggested by the fact that the *Suttavibhaṇga* of the Vinaya itself, in which the *Pātimokkha* is found in the Pāli canon,[2909] also incorporates an "Old Commentary", which "defines the *Pātimokkha* rule word by word"; the method of this commentary suggests that it may belong to the same period as the *Niddesa*.[2910] Independent *Prātimokṣa* texts are also found in the canons of other Mainstream Buddhist schools,[2911] and these versions "do not differ greatly from the Pāli".[2912] As we have seen elsewhere, such widespread distribution of a text through different canons and schools is usually considered evidence of its antiquity.

On this basis, then, I think we can conclude that the attitude towards social embodiment evidenced by the *Pātimokkha* is as old as anything found in Buddhism. This is indeed an unsurprising conclusion given the origins of Buddhism in the *śramaṇera* movement; its very commitment to monasticism; the centrality of the *saṃgha* to the overall structure of the religion; and so on.

[2908] Norman, *Pāli Lit.* 18.

[2909] Norman, *Pāli Lit.* 18.

[2910] Norman, *Pāli Lit.* 19.

[2911] Norman, *Pāli Lit.* 20.

[2912] Norman, *Pāli Lit.* 21.

App 1.1.4 Mindfulness of the body (cf. §2.1.3)

The materials that are incorporated into the model of "contemplation of the body" in the model of DN 22/MN 10[2913] are only datable with various degrees of certainty.[2914] However, there do seem to be indications that different parts of the model are of different antiquity. It also seems to me most likely, given the overall patterns of distribution of these component practices in the canon, that the DN 22 model itself represents a doctrinal synthesis that is preceded by the independent existence of some of the component parts in various roles. It is not my intention to try and reconstruct a detailed hypothesis about that history here. On the basis of the evidence before me, however, I think it is possible to state at least the following.

First, it seems likely that clear awareness is one of the oldest components of the model. It is already found in DN 2, the *Sāmaññaphala-sutta,* which (along with much of the remainder of the first *vagga* of DN) is considered one of the oldest parts of the canon.[2915] We can also note that along with many other components of the DN 2 model of the path, clear awareness is found in almost all the other texts of the first *vagga* of DN, which may be taken to show the centrality of this model on the whole and its constituents to the early Buddhism of this text.

Recall that in the DN 2 model, clear awareness is coupled with the idea of being a "guardian of the sense-doors" (*indriyesu guttadvāro*). Also, it is *not* presented as ensuing upon the deliberate seated cultivation of awareness of the breath, nor does the path proceed through the awareness of posture that seems to comprise an intermediate phase between the seated breath meditation

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[2913] See above p.

[2914] Note that the question of the relative antiquity of *parts* of the contemplation of the body is to be distinguished from the question of the antiquity of contemplation of the body *as a whole* relative to other members of the rubric of the four foundations of mindfulness. See once more n. 251 above for references to arguments by Lin and Schmithausen on the latter topic.

[2915] See below, p. 1427 for a discussion of the reasons for this dating.

and full-blown clear awareness. The overall impression, then, is of a practice in which the practitioner simply observed a general injunction to mindfulness throughout ordinary daily life. This practice may have been followed at some indeterminate intermediate chronological stage by the realisation that it was actually quite difficult, and as a result, an attempt may have been made to elaborate artificially simplified preparatory exercises as its basis (mindfulness of breath and posture). The preliminary exercises found in DN 22 could be the result of such a realisation.

This overall impression of the antiquity of "clear awareness" is confirmed by further evidence regarding some of the other texts we examined above. MN 27,[2916] the *Cūḷahatthipadopama-sutta,* for example, is regarded as impossible to date by Pande, but perhaps only because the narrative setting may be a later addition.[2917] The same text is assigned to the "old" stratum by Kingsbury's aorist test, however.[2918] MN 51 *Kandaraka-sutta*[2919] is regarded as mixed or difficult to date by Pande, but it seems that this is because he considers the part where the Buddha continues his sermon to a monk after the departure of the lay interlocutor Pessa a possible later addition.[2920] The outline of the four foundations of mindfulness is already present in the part of the text where the Buddha teaches to Pessa, however,[2921] even though the detailed description of it is only given in second part where the Buddha sermonises the monk. Further,

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[2916] See n. 292.

[2917] Pande 162.

[2918] Kingsbury diss 236.

[2919] See n. 292.

[2920] Pande 164.

[2921] Ñāṇamoli 444.

as Pande himself notes,[2922] even this portion of the latter part is based upon the very old model in the *Sāmaññaphala,* and so whether or not the current form of MN 51 is the product of later editorial work, the doctrines it contains are themselves presumably very old. Finally, SN 35.127, "Bhāradvaja" is regarded by Pande as an exceptional early text in the *Saṃyutta* containing it as a whole, but on dubiously subjective grounds.[2923]

It must be noted that among the texts we examined attesting the idea of clear awareness that can be dated on various grounds, some are exceptions to this pattern of early attestation. For example, MN 38, the *Mahātaṇhāsankhaya-sutta*[2924] is considered a mix. So, too, MN 112 *Chabbisodhana-sutta*[2925] is regarded as a mix: according to Kingsbury, closely following Pande, it "seems to be occupied with detailing the various ways certain phenomena (e.g. *viññāṇa*) have been defined across the rest of the Canon", but "contains a hodgepodge of elements from various chronological strata." Thus, "the *sutta* as a whole must have composed [*sic*] at a late date, but perhaps compiled out of material from a variety of dates."[2926] There is obviously nothing to prevent an idea of early origins from continuing to appear in texts of varied dates, however, and the bulk of the evidence argues overwhelmingly that the general idea that mindfulness of the given physical body will have salutary salvific effects is extremely early indeed.

[2922] Pande 164.

[2923] Pande 219-219.

[2924] See n. 292.

[2925] See n. 292.

[2926] Kingsbury diss, 54. This is a rare instance where Kingsbury differs (or pretends to) from Pande, who assigns the *sutta* as a whole as late; Pande, too, however, says clearly that the *sutta* contains "elements of different stages thrown together without the least regard for consistency"; Pande 138-139.

The other member of the ultimate sixfold "mindfulness of the body" rubric that seems to be very old is the contemplation of (oneself as) a corpse. Since I will deal with this question in detail below, I will not repeat here the reasons for thinking this. Suffice it to say that it is clear from canonical descriptions of charnel-ground meditations that at least the imaginative use of the image of a corpse in the charnel-grounds as an object of meditation on the impurity of the body is as old as the canon.

Curiously, the aspect of the sixfold DN 22 model of "contemplation of the body" for which evidence of antiquity is next strongest is the entire assemblage of six elements as a whole. Opinion of the age of DN 22 itself, the *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna-sutta,* which as we saw above is the *locus classicus* for this contemplation, is somewhat conflicted. The text is considered old by Norman. This evaluation is based in part upon the judgement that the very doctrine we are examining here is "perhaps the most important [doctrine] after the Aryan Path in early Buddhism, and this *sutta* is the oldest authoritative statement of the doctrine."[2927] Pande, on the other hand, assigns the text as a whole to the "late" stratum.[2928] He considers the latter part of the text in particular, which elaborates the Four Noble Truths, late, by reason of its "Abhidhammic dictionary style of definition". His comments on the remainder of the *sutta* are somewhat ambiguous, however. Pande notes that the remainder of the text contains a number of rubrics that belong to a style he elsewhere considers scholastic and therefore late, and he also places it later than the *Mahānidāna-sutta* (DN 15, which he on the whole regards as composite) because "it represents the latest stage in the development of the doctrine of *sati* [mindfulness] in the Nikāyas".[2929] On the other hand, Pande does not give any explicit date for MN 10 *Satipaṭṭhāna-*

[2927] Norman, *Pāli Lit.* 40. See also n. 474. Like Pande, Norman considers the second part, containing the exposition of the Four Noble Truths, Abhidhammic in style and late.

[2928] Pande 115.

[2929] Pande 109-110.

sutta, which is identical to the first part of DN 22; this is difficult to explain if he is confident that DN 22 is definitely late, since it would surely lead to the same judgment of any text identical in contents.

Beyond DN 22 itself, I was unable to find anything in any of our secondary authors on dating questions that would help us determine the date of any of the remaining texts that contain the DN 22 model. This means, it seems, that apart from Norman's opinion that the doctrine of the text is central to early Buddhism, there is little to make us think that the more elaborate sixfold model into which clear awareness and charnel-ground contemplations were woven is as old as those components are on their own.

Three elements of the contemplation of the body remain for us to discuss independent of their incorporation into the DN 22 rubric: analysis of the body into four elements, contemplation of the impurity of the body, and awareness of the breath.[2930] With regard to these elements, the evidence is mixed. There are reasons to think that analysis into (four or five) elements and contemplation of impurity may have had some independent existence prior to the elaboration of the full model, though the reasons are weaker than for clear awareness and charnel-ground contemplations. As for awareness of the breath, I know of no reasons whatsoever to consider the practice particularly early.

In order to consider the possible independent prior practice of element analysis of the body and awareness of bodily impurity, we must first consider an argument mounted by Pande about MN 62, the *Mahārāhulovāda-sutta.*[2931] On the whole, Pande regards this text as of mixed date, the

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[2930] As we saw above, there is little evidence that awareness of posture, the second member of the sixfold rubric, ever appears independent of the other elements of the meditation.

[2931] See p. 168 above.

end product of a process of interpolation and addition characterised by "confusion".[2932] Unusually, however, Pande also hypothetically reconstructs a detailed history of this text. Let us entertain his argument for the purposes of our own analysis.

Without naming the doctrine it teaches as *sakkāyadiṭṭhi*, the text begins by rehearsing a formula now familiar to us from our consideration of that doctrine (the relevance to contemplations of the body will become clear momentarily):[2933] "Any kind of material form, whether past, future, or present, internal or external , gross or subtle, inferior or superior, far or near, all material form should be seen as it actually is with proper wisdom thus: '*This is not mine, this I am not, this is not myself.*'"[2934] But then Rāhula, to whom the Buddha is preaching, asks:

> "Only material form, Blessed One? Only material form, Sublime One?"[2935]

Pande notes of this moment in the text:

> "Had the sermon belonged originally to the age in which the 5 *khandha* theory was rampant[*sic*!] , it is hardly likely that Buddha should have made so serious an omission and left it to be pointed out by Rāhula. It may be remembered that the Buddha of that age never hesitated in introducing the full list of the 5 *khandhas* even quite gratuitously at times. Further, the sequel containing the original continuation, deals with the five elements of the *rūpakkhandha* alone, and is silent about other *khandhas*."

Pande therefore concludes that an " interpolator makes Rāhula ask" his question "in order to bring the *sutta* in line with the five *khandha* theory".[2936] Pande further relates the oldest stratum he identifies in the text to a phase in the development of Buddhist doctrine to which he refers elsewhere, supposedly prior to the development of *khandha* theory. In this phase of

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2932 Pande 151.

2933 We will consider the implications of this text for the dating of *sakkāya* doctrine itself below.

2934 Ñāṇamoli 527, my emphases: *yaṃ kiñci . . . rūpaṃ atītānāgatapaccuppannaṃ ajjhattaṃ vā bahiddhā vā oḷārikaṃ vā sukhumaṃ vā hīnaṃ vā paṇītaṃ vā yaṃ dūre santike vā sabbaṃ rūpaṃ netaṃ mama nesohamasmi na meso attā'ti evametaṃ yathābhūtaṃ sammappaññāya daṭṭhabbanti.*

2935 Ñāṇamoli 527: *rūpameva nu kho bhagavā, rūpameva nu kho sugatāti.*

2936 Pande 152-153.

doctrinal development, according to Pande, *citta* and *viññāṇa* were considered synonymous, and understood in the framework of a basic twofold distinction between *kāya* and *viññāṇa*.[2937] In other words, to summarise, Pande sees an oldest stratum in this text that dates back to an era in Buddhist doctrine prior to the elaboration and ascendance of five *khandha* theory. I believe Pande argues for quite forcefully for the reconstruction of this phase, and he adduces much evidence in its support.

Now, to return to the interest of this argument for our current topic of the contemplation of the body, the oldest stratum that Pande so identifies in the text proceeds, after the "interpolated" question of Rāhula and its answer, to an analysis of the person in terms of five elements. It asserts that the proper consideration of the absence of self in the elements of earth, water, fire, air and space – thinking, that is, "This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self" – successively leads to a "detachment of the *citta* from them".[2938] The resemblance to the fifth member of the sixfold DN 22 rubric, the analysis of the body in terms of the four elements, is striking.

This is not all. Each of the contemplations prescribed under the head of each element goes into some detail about the exact elements of the body as a whole that are to be considered as objects for the overall disidentificatory exercise undertaken, and in the case of earth and water, we find many of the same elements also found in the list of body parts used for the fourth member

[2937] Pande 152. For another context in which Pande uses this doctrine as a criterion of dating, see n. 3028. See also Pande 496-497, where Pande also cites quite copious references in which he finds this model.

[2938] Pande 152, referring to the phrase: *evam etaṃ yathābhūtaṃ sammappaññāya disvā paṭhavīdhātuyā* [*āpodhātuyā, tejodhātuyā* etc.] *nibbindati. paṭhavīdhātuyā* [etc.] *cittaṃ virājeti;* "When one sees it thus as it actually is with proper wisdom, one becomes disenchanted with the earth element [etc.] and makes the mind dispassionate towards the earth element [etc.]", Ñāṇamoli 528 etc. Pande relates this result of the contemplation to his phase of doctrine, prior to five *khandha* theory, in which Buddhism worked with a dichotomy of *viññāṇa-kāya*.

of the DN 22 sixfold rubric, the contemplation of the disgusting. Under the head of the "earth element", the meditator is to consider "whatever internally, belonging to oneself, is solid, solidified, and clung-to (*upādinnaṃ*[2939]), that is, head-hairs, body-hairs, nails, teeth, skin, flesh, sinews, bones, bone-marrow, kidneys, heart, liver, diaphragm, spleen, lungs, large intestines, small intestines, contents of the stomach, feces, or whatever else . . ."[2940] Under the head of the "water element", the meditator is further to consider "bile, phlegm, pus, blood, sweat, fat, tears, grease, spittle, snot, oil-of-the-joints, urine, or whatever else . . ."[2941] This is simply the list of body parts found in DN 22 verbatim, but split in the middle (or fused, if DN 22 followed chronologically);[2942] we note, however, that the items in the list are not yet explicitly stated to be "disgusting".[2943]

I think, then, that Pande was onto something, and that we can add, to the evidence that he adduces for the early date of this stratum of the text, the fact that it contains elements also found in the DN 22 model (which Norman observes was so central and seminal for early Buddhism as a whole), but in forms incompatible with that model. This suggests that we see here a prototypical phase of those elements, where they were understood in connection with the pre-*khandha* analysis of the person, and analysis into the elements played a more central role in the project of disidentification.

2939 Note, of course, the connection to the idea of *upādāna* in *upādānakkhandha* in other versions of the *sakkāyadiṭṭhi* doctrine.

2940 Ñāṇamoli 528.

2941 Ñāṇamoli 528.

2942 All differences between the terms here and the text cited above, p. 154, from Walshe's DN 22 are differences of translation; the original wording of the respective lists is identical.

2943 Recall that roughly the same contemplation, relating the body-part list to the earth element and thereby extirpating the notion of self, was mentioned in another text, the MN 28 *Mahāhatthipadopama-sutta,* above; see n. 300.

Immediately below, we will consider the further implications of the present text (i.e. MN 62 *Mahārāhulovāda-sutta*) on Pande's analysis for the doctrine of *sakkāyadiṭṭhi.* I will argue there that another element in favour of the early date for this stratum of the text is the presence in it of an apparently earlier (pre-*khandha*) theory of disidentification or "de-*ātman*-ification". The possible identification of further datable passages containing these notions would be an interesting agenda for future research.

For now, it must be admitted that this argument for the independent prior (intertwined) existence of element analysis of the body and the raw materials for the contemplation of the disgusting is weaker than that for clear awareness and charnel-ground contemplation.[2944] Even so, however, the most likely interpretation, it seems to me, is that at least three components of the later "contemplation of the body" in DN 22 developed originally as separate meditations: (1) the practice of clear awareness coupled with "guarding the sense-doors"; (2) charnel-ground contemplation; and (3) analysis of the body in terms of elements, and variously of the earth element alone or of earth and water together in terms of the list of body parts. These three meditations, I suspect, were then drawn together under the rubric of "contemplation of the body" and incorporated in the curriculum found in DN 22 and like texts.

Note, of course, that in contrast to texts where these elements are found independently, the larger framework of DN 22 includes reference to the five *khandha* schema itself, in addition to other developed *mātṛkā*-style doctrinal rubrics such as the twelve bases.[2945] DN 22 and its

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[2944] None of the other texts cited in my treatment of these contemplations were dated by the secondary scholars I rely on here for such questions.

[2945] Walshe 342.

parallels would thus be later than the very earliest parts of the canon. Beyond that, I cannot say how late it may have been, and we should perhaps defer to the learning and instincts of Norman and consider the model set forth there still quite early nonetheless.

Note, too, that it may even be only at this stage that the concept of "contemplating the body as body" (and also "contemplating *vedanā* as *vedanā*," " . . . *citta*" and " . . . *dhammāni*") was elaborated as such. This may be another instance of the phenomenon whereby explicit labels for practices postdate the first elaboration of those practices themselves.

We turn, finally, among the members of the "contemplation of the body" rubric, to the meditation on the breath. In contrast to the elements of the contemplation of the body studied above, none of the texts we reviewed in considering that meditation were dated as early by any of the scholars we use here. The only text upon which any scholar passes opinion, indeed, was SN 54, the *Ānāpanasaṃyutta,*[2946] and that indirectly. This *saṃyutta* falls within the *Mahāvagga* of SN, which is regarded in almost its entirety by Pande as "uncertain" in date. As Kingsbury points out, however, the main reason Pande is prepared to cede even this much antiquity to the texts seems to be that he is prepared to grant that the *bodhipakkhiya-dhamma* formula is early and may date back to "the life time of the Master himself".[2947] Even this judgement, however, only affects the first seven *saṃyuttas,* and so there is little reason, at least on the basis of the little Pande says on the topic, to treat this *saṃyutta* as anything but late.

Once more, then, I hesitate to draw any firm conclusions without a full survey of all the places in the entire canon where this meditation appears independently, but for the present, it seems

[2946] See n. 289, and the paragraph to which this note is appended.

[2947] Pande 224-225.

that the hypothesis that is consistent with the evidence I have before me is that the independent use of *ānāpana,* free of its context in the DN 22 curriculum, may actually *post*-date DN 22 itself. We might speculate, therefore, that this practice was first elaborated around the same time as the overall model, as a part of the broader curriculum into which were incorporated clear awareness, charnel-ground contemplation, and the reworked contemplations on body parts and body as four elements; perhaps only thereafter did contemplation of the breath come free of this context and begin to circulate as an independent practice.

In sum, then, the larger point is that the charnel-ground contemplations and practice of clear awareness alone are evidence enough to show that the given physical body, and wrong-headed cognitive relations to it, were already regarded as deeply problematic in the earliest strata of Buddhism that we know. To these, we can perhaps add the body-parts analysis and element analysis of the body, which may also be similarly early. The finer hypothetical trajectory of possible development I have traced here is secondary, and dispensable, to that more basic point.

App 1.1.5 *Sakkāyadiṭṭhi* (cf. §2.1.1.3)

In this survey of evidence for dates of Pāli materials treated in Ch. 2.1, I have surveyed first ideas that I think can be shown to be relatively old. We now come to a last significant set of doctrines, ideas about *sakkāya*(-*diṭṭhi*). I have considered the dates of these materials last because on the whole, the evidence to date it to the earliest stratum of the Pāli canon is weakest.

For example, Pande considers SN 1.21[2948] late precisely on the basis of the fact that it refers to the concept of *sakkāyadiṭṭhi.* He bases his date upon this criterion without any explanation, as if expecting it to be already known that *sakkāyadiṭṭhi* as a whole is late.[2949] Similarly, we saw above that *sakkāya* doctrine, especially in its seminal MN 44 format, is closely interwoven with five *khandha* analysis, and we have already noted that generally speaking, Pande regards the doctrine of five *khandhas* itself as late. On this grounds, for example, he judges most of the texts in the entire *Khandhasaṃyutta* (SN 22) as late as a rule;[2950] to this he only makes certain exceptions on specific grounds. Further, MN 44 itself, which was key to our examination of *sakkāya* doctrine above,[2951] is one of a pair of *suttas* (with MN 32) characterised as "dry", "dogmatic" etc. by Pande; he therefore considers them late because they "show very clearly the tendencies of scholastic systematisation".[2952] MN 109,[2953] too, is likewise considered late by Pande, because of its "close scholastic analysis" etc.[2954] Finally, MN 131, *Bhaddekaratta-sutta*[2955] is one of a group of four texts (through MN 134) that are considered late by Pande. In the course of his explanation for this judgement, Pande makes it clear that he considers the rubric of the twenty *sakkāyadiṭṭhi* itself late, once more because of his general assumptions about

[2948] See p. 104 above.

[2949] Pande 185, 228. Note, however, against Pande's doctrinally motivated dating, that this reference occurs in a verse of the *Sagāthasaṃyutta,* and that the verse here is usually regarded on the whole as comprising early material.

[2950] We saw above that SN 22 contains many of the attestations of the concept elsewhere labelled as *sakkāyadiṭṭhi,* namely the wrong identification of self as, of or in the *khandhas,* if most usually without calling it by that name; see n. 175.

[2951] See p. 105 above.

[2952] Pande 134. Pande generally seems not to like "scholastic systematisation".

[2953] See p. 107 above.

[2954] Pande 138.

[2955] See p. 111 above.

"scholastic" *mātṛkā* sets.[2956] MN 131 also falls in the *Vibhaṇga-vagga,* which Norman considers probably late in its entirety because of its anticipation of Abhidhamma methods.[2957]

We find the same possible tendency to lateness in texts where *sakkāyadiṭṭhi* is included in lists of fetters, insofar as questions of dating can be decided.[2958] DN 33[2959] can be considered late, for a number of quite compelling reasons: tradition holds that Sāriputta was the author of this text and DN 34;[2960] it further contains a number of formulae themselves regarded as late, and the overall structure of the text seems to mirror the structure of the *Aṇguttara* corpus.[2961] Pande, likewise, does not hesitate to assign it to a late stratum for a number of similar reasons.[2962] On the other hand, MN 2[2963] is regarded as impossible to date by Pande,[2964] but very strikingly, is assigned to the "old" stratum by Kingsbury on the basis of his aorist test. If this test is reliable, it should be independent of doctrinal content, and therefore given precedence over all doctrinal and quasi-doctrinal grounds for dating.

[2956] Pande 141: "It is clearly a case of a set of hallowed old verses interpreted exclusively in terms of a later dogma."

[2957] Norman, *Pāli Lit.* 48.

[2958] Here once more we are handicapped by the fact that such lists are quite widely attested, and we cannot be sure that the sample considered in this dissertation catches all texts for which evidence provides dates.

[2959] See p. 109 above.

[2960] Norman, *Pāli Lit.* 43.

[2961] von Hinüber, *Handbook* 32.

[2962] Pande 113-114.

[2963] See p. 109 above.

[2964] Pande 159.

In the face of all this evidence that *sakkāya* doctrine may be late, or at least that it is broadly attested in texts regarded as late, it might be asked why I am nonetheless including it in this chapter on the treatment of the theme of the body in *early* Pāli Buddhism. I do so because the picture changes somewhat when we consider the doctrine the term labels, without fixating on the term *per se.*

We already glimpsed a part of the relevant pattern of evidence above in MN 62, the *Mahārāhulovāda-sutta,* which we examined above for its implications for the dates of ideas about contemplation of the body (the body-parts analysis, and analysis of the body into elements).[2965] This same text, as we saw, without naming the doctrine it teaches as *sakkāyadiṭṭhi* as such, says according to the formula familiar from the passages already cited above,

> "Any kind of material form, whether past, future, or present, internal or external , gross or subtle, inferior or superior, far or near, all material form should be seen as it actually is with proper wisdom thus: '*This is not mine, this I am not, this is not myself.*'"[2966]

As we saw, Pande has argued suggestively that this portion of the text belongs to a very earliest stratum. He further gives us good reason to think may *predate* the elaboration of *khandha* analysis, to a phase of doctrine that thought of the person rather primarily in terms of a dichotomy of *kāya-viññāṇa.* I further argued that this dating would be consistent with the possibility that the use found in that text of the body-parts list and analysis of the body into elements predates the elaboration of the more synthetic model of contemplation of the body found in DN 22. If these arguments are correct, then, what we see in MN 62 would most likely be a similarly early and prototypical form of the doctrine later labelled as *sakkāya* etc. In this prototypical form, the problem is still the identification of self, etc. in the body, but the body understood as a congeries of five elements, rather than as a composite of five *khandhas.*

[2965] See above p. 1403.

[2966] Ñāṇamoli 527, my emphases.

Some further incidental support for the possibility that the ideas eventually named *sakkāyadiṭṭhi* may already have been current before the term is provided by SN 22.1, the *Nakulapitā-sutta.*[2967] This text is taken by Pande as containing an actual fragment of a sermon by the Buddha (following Rhys Davids); the text also contains the *kāya-citta* model of human being; it is therefore regarded by Pande as early.[2968] Here, too, as we have already seen, a person who does not identify with the *khandhas* can thereby ensure that he remains "afflicted in body but not afflicted in mind", along the lines of the usual *sakkāya* talk.[2969]

Seemingly related to MN 62 in this regard is MN 28, the *Mahāhatthipadopama-sutta,* a text which, however, as we saw above, is assigned as a whole to a late stratum by Pande and Norman.[2970] This text, which we touched on above, is a very strange mixture of doctrines. It gives the same analyses of the first four of the five elements (earth, water, fire and air) as they are found within the body as are found in MN 62. In each case, however, the further assertion is made that the element in question is the same within the body as outside it, and cosmological ideas about the eventual destruction of each element in various apocalyptic catastrophes are adduced to convince us that the same element in the body is likewise impermanent. These arguments are then in turn turned to convince monks that they should be entirely dispassionate in the face of insult and physical attack. This whole, in turn, is placed in a frame where Sāriputta teaches that the five *upādānakkhandas* are suffering, and the moral of this

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[2967] See p. 111 above.

[2968] Pande 210. On the *kāya-citta* model, see n. 2937 above.

[2969] Inexplicably, however, Pande does not take into account that the *kāya-citta* contrast assumed here is coupled with a *khandha* analysis of the person.

[2970] See n. 2895, 2896 above.

exposition is that the Four Noble Truths encompass all wholesome states. As a whole, then, the text must post-date the rise of formalised doctrines of the four noble truths and *khandha* theory, and the fact that it is presented as taught by Sāriputta might also mean it is late.[2971] But Pande does not note two peculiarities: that once we get past the *khandha* theory embedded in the frame, the text is disproportionately preoccupied with the material elements as they are tied up with the problematic of false identification of a self; and the peculiarities of the use of cosmological ideas to encourage equanimity. It does not seem clear to me, then, that the lateness of some elements in the text necessarily mean that the elements that concern us here are also late.[2972]

In fact, another possibly significant case is MN 140, the *Dhātuvibhaṇga-sutta,*[2973] the portions of which overlapping with MN 28 could easily have formed the older source for the element analysis of the latter. Kingsbury included this text in his aorist test because he was unable to find opinions about his date in other secondary literature, and concluded on the basis of those texts that it belongs to the "old" stratum.[2974] However, in a comment that seems to have escaped Kingsbury's notice,[2975] Pande *does* treat the text as one of those it is difficult to assign a date, but notes explicitly that "although its elaborateness and the *uddesa-vibhaṇga* style suggest the lateness of the *sutta,* its ideas and the *upamā* it uses are early". Pande also notes that

[2971] See above n. 2960.

[2972] Likewise, the repeated formulaic section on the monks immunity to verbal and physical attack may be a later addition to this older core: note that it is in this context that the citation of MN 21 occurs, Ñāṇamoli 279.

[2973] See n. 299.

[2974] Kingsbury diss 236.

[2975] This is fortunate, in fact, since presumably, if Kingsbury had noticed Pande's treatment of the text, he might not have tested it by his own method, and we would not have his independent evidence of its early date.

Winternitz considers that the "touching narrative framework" "gives the impression of actual events".[2976] It may be, therefore, that the text comprises a core of old material which has undergone some kind of later editorial rearrangement into a larger whole.

This same text, MN 140, which indeed has an unusual and concrete frame narrative that does not seem generic, also seems as though it may possibly be old because it contains non-standard crypto-*mātṛkā* rubrics. For example, it speaks of six *dhātu,* but these are not *dhātu* as found in the "classical" eighteenfold scheme, but rather earth, water, fire, air, space, and consciousness. It also presents an unusual rubric of "eighteen kinds of mental exploration (*aṭṭhārasamanopavicāro*)";[2977] and it speaks of "four foundations (*caturādhiṭṭhāno,* Skt. *caturadhiṣṭhāna*)" referring to "not neglecting wisdom, preserving truth, cultivating relinquishment, and the foundation of peace".[2978] Within this overall frame, the earth, water, fire and space elements are explained exactly as in MN 62 and MN 28 above.[2979] The space element is further uniquely explained as all the holes, cavities and apertures in the body (nothing in MN 28 corresponds to this).[2980]

In the case of these first five elements, this text, too, repeats the refrain that one should "see [each] as it actually is with proper wisdom thus: 'This is not mine . . .'". The text then turns,

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[2976] Pande 176.

[2977] An electronic search shows this concept is a *hapax* in the canon (though the term is repeated three times in this one text).

[2978] This rubric, too, is unique to this text.

[2979] Ñāṇamoli 1089-1090.

[2980] Ñāṇamoli 1091.

uniquely, to describing consciousness, "pure and bright" (*parisuddhaṃ pariyodātaṃ*).[2981] In this case, notably, the text does *not* say that one should be aware it is "not mine" etc.! Rather, it is merely explained as that with which one cognises pleasant or painful experiences, etc., with which one understands various propositions, etc.[2982] This special treatment for *viññāṇa* suggests the opposition between *viññāṇa/citta* and *kāya* which we saw above Pande suggests is characteristic of an early stage of doctrinal development.

In all, then, MN 140 is a highly unusual text, and seems early. The inclusion in it of the otherwise unusual analysis of the person in terms of elements seems to indicate that such an analysis is likewise probably early, and supports our tentative conclusions, after Pande, about MN 62. I have examined this and other texts in which these notions appear in such detail because they are, to my knowledge, the only evidence we have for those ideas. Taken together, I think this evidence is very suggestive. The highly idiosyncratic nature of the texts, the precise fact that their ideas do not get taken up into stock formulae and repeated all over the canon, and the various non-stereotypical reasons for believing each to be of early date, to me suggest that here we are dealing with a residue of an early phase of doctrine.

If this is correct, then it seems most likely to me that, on the whole, we see three rough phases of possible development towards the "classical" form of *sakkāya* doctrine. In the first, the idea that one should not identify a self as, in or of the material body is already present. In the second, the place of the body as analysed into material elements in this doctrine gets taken by the schema of five *khandhas,* and the centrality of the physical body lessens somewhat. In the

[2981] Note the echoes of Yogācāra/Tathāgatagarbha ideas about *prakṛtiprabhāsvaracittam;* soon hereafter, the text turns to expounding "equanimity, purified and bright, malleable, wieldy and radiant" (*upekkhā . . . parisuddhā pariyodātā mudu ca kammaññā ca pabhassarā*); Ñāṇamoli 1092.

[2982] Ñāṇamoli 1091-1092.

third, perhaps, or at the same time as this second development, this entire doctrine is given the meta-label of *sakkāya*(-*diṭṭhi*), and in this form it is then taken up into lists of fetters.

Ironically enough, the incorporation of the term *kāya* into this label may have preserved the trace of the initial centrality of the body to the notion, even as *khandha* discourse was pushing in the other direction to make the physical body just one *khandha* among equals. Eventually, the various permutations of mistaken ideas about each *khandha,* it seems, are even counted and standardised as the "twenty *sakkāyadiṭṭhi*".

If this hypothetical trajectory of development is sound, it would also give us further reason for thinking that the term *kāya* in *sakkāya* is does not, primarily, mean "group", as translators over-correcting for orthodoxy would have it. It would also mean that we have extra reason to think that the physical body is indeed, as I argued above, more primary to the overall set of possibilities for the mistaken identification of self than the various other *khandhas* that eventually found equal place with it in the "classical" version of the doctrine.

Even if this hypothetical narrative of development is wrong in some details, however, or if further more exhaustive study were to show that there is never enough evidence to be sure either way, I hope that I have said enough to suggest that even when not labelled as such, something like what was eventually called *sakkāyadiṭṭhi* was probably present in an early stratum of the canon. Indeed, it seems to me, given the almost indubitable centrality to all Buddhism of the rejection of ordinary *ātman*,[2983] that this is also very plausible on *prima facie*

[2983] I deliberately leave open here the notoriously vexed question of exactly what Buddhism might have meant by this rejection of *ātman*, a question that continues to animate a controversy that may be glimpsed in such works as Collins, *Selfless Persons;* Thanissaro, "Not-Self Strategy"; Albahari, "Against No-*Ātman* Theories"; Lindtner, "Brahmanism to Buddhism"; and Harvey, *Selfless Mind.*

terms. For the purposes of our larger task here, i.e. to determine the relative date of these ideas about given embodiments, physical and social, that much should suffice.

App 1.1.6 Overview

To summarise, there is certainly evidence to suggest that ideas about given physical and social embodiments underwent a certain degree of doctrinal development over the period spanned by the Pāli canon. However, it also seems that the evidence indicates that all the significant ideas we have covered about embodiment were already present in the earliest stratum.

App 1.2 Materials relating to *amata* as a characterisation of the religious ideal (cf. Ch. 2.2)

I now turn to the considerations that bear on dating of the various materials adduced to show that the "deathless" was an important dimension of the religious ideal in early Buddhism, as argued in Ch. 2.2.

Several of the scholars who have studied *amata* discourse (for which see §2.2.2), in particular, have already passed opinion on its place in the relative chronology of the Pāli materials.

Caroline Rhys Davids, for instance, seems clearly to consider *amata* as a religious ideal to be representative of an earlier and more authentic phase of Buddhism than either the doctrine of causality or Nibbāna. She sees the latter as having supplanted *amata* in two successive waves.[2984] Her basis for this assertion, however, is unclear, and I suspect that the relative chronology of the Pāli canon it assumes may be too heavily based upon suppositions about doctrinal developments and their temporal order.

[2984] Rhys Davids, "Original Buddhism and Amṛta", 375, 378-379, 380.

Like Rhys Davids, Kumoi Shōzen also argues that *amata* discourse is proper to an early layer of the Pāli materials. He cites in support of this argument that fact that it appears frequently in SuN, DhP, ThiG and the *Sagātha-vagga* (the first *vagga*) of SN.[2985] Kumoi argues that in the period of Indian religious history leading up to the inception of Buddhism, we see a broad process whereby an *amṛta* that was taken as the religious goal (in the Vedas) was first identified with Brahman (in the Upaniṣads). Then, when Buddhism appeared on the scene, *amṛta* also identified in turn with the Buddhist *summum bonum,* interchangeably referred to as both *amṛta* and *brahman* in addition to *nirvāṇa.*[2986] The materials in which we see the usage of *amata/amṛta* are thus, for Kumoi, a vestige of a period in which Buddhism accommodated itself to its context, "until such time as the term *nirvāṇa,* in reference to the ultimate goal in Buddhism, came completely to have its original Buddhist significance".[2987]

Nishi Giyū also sees *amata* as having been a feature of a very early phase in the history of the doctrine, but his argument for this claim seems to rely on an implicit acceptance of the

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[2985] Kumoi 78-79. There seems to be some confusion in Kumoi's comments, as in similar passing comments found in the work of many scholars, between the idea that a text contains very old material, and the idea that the entire text is very old. More careful scholars, on the other hand, seem regularly to note the possibility or likelihood that even texts containing apparently very old material may also contain interpolations, and be the product of various phases of compilation over an extended period of time. It is instructive, for instance, to contrast Kumoi's blanket statements here with the opinions of Norman on the same texts: Norman argues, for instance, that the last two *vagga* of SuN are very old, but does not necessarily hold the entire text to be as old, *Pāli Lit.,* 63-70. He similarly recognises the presence of very old verse metres in ThaG, but suggests that the whole was probably compiled over a period of up to three centuries. He makes this assertion on metrical grounds, but notes that it is also echoed by the commentarial tradition, 74. See also, however, Warder, *Pāli Metre* 95, for arguments that much of ThiG seems relatively late on metrical grounds; so too for SN 1, Warder 96-97.

[2986] Kumoi notes that in SN 5.1.6, the pursuit of the eightfold noble path and the extirpation of the three poisons are said to be the true *brahmacārya*; this immediately precedes SN 5.1.7 (cited above n. 366) where they said to lead to undying, Bodhi 1527, Kumoi 78.

[2987] Note that the logic of Kumoi's argument here is precisely the opposite to that urged by Johannes Bronkhorst in *Two Traditions.* For Kumoi, Buddhism begins looking *more* like its Brahminical context, and only gradually assumes a clearly distinct identity and terminology over time. For Bronkhorst, Buddhism begins as a radical departure from its context, but then grows to look more like its context over time as it is *influenced by* that context. The juxtaposition of these contradictory assumptions is a salutary lesson in the dangers of such inferential arguments of this nature about what is old.

historicity of the narratives found within the canon itself, since he primarily adduces in support of this idea the fact that the goal is described as *amata* in the "First Sermon" (the *Dhamma-cakka-ppavattana-sutta*)[2988] and the story of Sāriputta's enlightenment.[2989]

Similarly, Tilmann Vetter argues that this doctrine was characteristic of early Buddhism.[2990]

One sometimes suspects that some of these comments are motivated by implicit constructive or apologetic agendas in each of these authors. In light of the prevalence and importance of the notion of *amṛta* in Upaniṣadic materials, however, it does seem plausible that the notion should have been present in Buddhism from very early on, as a term appropriated from non-Buddhist religious discourse and turned to Buddhist ends. This would be consistent with a pattern that is observable in other early Buddhist usages, such as the discourse of ritual sacrifice and its fires,[2991] *brahmacārya,* and even the term *dharma.* Aside from this *prima facie* plausibility of the idea that *amata* should have been present in Buddhism from early on, however, it is somewhat difficult to assess the position of that discourse in the relative chronology of the Pāli canon as a whole. In what follows, I consider the little information that can be gleaned from secondary works about the dating of texts in which *amata* features.

It is striking, if the term *amata* is indeed early, that it is so conspicuously absent from those strata of DN that are most usually recognised as the oldest. If *amata* discourse was indeed

[2988] Nishi 736-737.

[2989] Nishi 738. Nishi notes specifically that Sāriputta (is supposed to have) met the Buddha within the first year after the Buddha's awakening. Nishi cites the *Mahāvastu* and *Apadāna* for Sāriputta's story, but versions of this story are also found in the Vinaya (*Mahāvagga* I, 23-24, cited in Rhys Davids 376-377) and also at ThaG 1172, in AN, SN etc.

[2990] Vetter, *Ideas and Meditative Practices,* xxviii-xxix; xxxvi; 5-6; 8-9.

[2991] See Jurewicz, "Playing with Fire".

characteristic of early Buddhism and a sign of an accommodation to non-Buddhist interlocutors, and was later outgrown, why would it not be rife in the oldest layers of DN? Indeed, it turns out that there are very few instances of the term *amata* in DN at all: it is found only in DN 14 *Mahāpadāna-sutta*, DN 18 *Janavasabha-sutta,* DN 19 *Mahāgovinda-sutta*,[2992] and DN 21 *Sakkapañha-sutta.*[2993] These texts seem to be mixed in their dates. DN 14, to the extent a clear judgement can be formed, is relatively early.[2994] DN 21 is considered early by Norman[2995] and of mixed date by Pande.[2996] DN 18 is considered late by both Norman and Pande.[2997] DN 19 is considered late by Norman.[2998]

When we turn from DN to the other Nikāyas, however, we find that, among the passages studied above, there are a significant number for which quite firm evidence suggests a relatively early date.

[2992] DN 19 is a strange and unusual usage, referring to the "deathless (*amata*) Brahma world".

[2993] In this case, my study should be exhaustive: I ran a full search through DN for *amata* and its inflected variants on the LaTrobe University searchable canon.

[2994] Norman, *Pāli Lit.* 36, Pande 94-95. See p. 1443 of this dissertation for a detailed discussion of the problem of the date of this text.

[2995] Because it is quoted by name in SN; Norman 40.

[2996] Pande adds further reasons for considering the text early, including an unusual treatment of *nidāna* theory, and the fact that "answers to the queries do not suffer from hackneyed expressions and formula". He is inclined, however, to consider the mythological potions of the *sutta* (which recounts the conversion of Sakka, king of the gods) late, and notes further that the mythological portions only are in verse and frame the doctrinal/dialectical portions, which are rather in prose. He thus suggests that the prose dialogue is early and has been "encased within a later, luxuriantly mythical prologue and epilogue"; 108-109.

[2997] For its inclusion of miraculous material, and also the enumeration of doctrinal elements; Norman 38, Pande 106.

[2998] Norman 38. This text is associated in contact, further, with DN 17 and 18, which also contain enumerations of doctrinal elements also associated with later developments; Norman 38. Pande's comments on the date of this text are opaque to me; 107, 115.

The *Sutta-nipāta*[2999] is supposed to comprise in at least some of its contents "some of the oldest Buddhist poetry known to us".[3000] Some of the verses in *Theragāthā* that make reference to *amata* are in old metres.[3001] Similarly, the *Dhammapāda,*[3002] which as we have seen contains quite numerous references to *amata* and related notions, is at least early enough that versions of it are widely distributed between Sarvâstivāda texts, the *Mahāvastu,* four Chinese translations, etc.[3003] Analogous arguments also apply to the many variants of the "First Sermon", the *Dhamma-cakka-ppavattana-sutta,* as Vetter points out.[3004] In particular, MN 26 *Ariyapariyesana-sutta*[3005] may be early. It contains information not found elsewhere in the canon about the

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2999 Especially likely to be old are materials from the first two *vagga* (see n. 3000 following), e.g. 1.2 (see n. 388), 1.11 (see n. 355, 377), 2.1 (see n. 352, 375), and 2.12 (see n. 401). We have also, however, discussed SuN 3.4 (see n. 386), 3. 5. (see n. 384), 3.6 (see n. 385), and 5.15 (see n. 387).

3000 Norman 63, following Warder; Pande 53-55. The situation is complicated, however. Only the first two *vagga,* namely the *Aṭṭhaka-vagga* and *Pārāyana-vagga,* are surely old according to Norman. This is evidenced by the fact that the *Niddesa,* also a canonical text included in the *Khuddaka Nikāya,* comments on them, and in the case of the *Aṭṭhaka-vagga,* that the *Niddesa* even shows evidence that by the time of its compilation, variant readings of the root text were current. *Pārāyana-vagga* contains mixed metre, and therefore may be of mixed age. It does contain *triṣṭubh-jagatī,* however, which is usually thought early; Norman 69. Even these earliest *vagga,* nonetheless, may contain interpolated material, Norman 63. Warder, *Pāli Metre* 224, also gives reasons for considering that these two *vagga* "cover a very wide range of time"! Conversely, "Even in the *vaggas* and *suttas* which are not commented upon in the Niddesa there are metrical and linguistic features which are generally reckoned to be old;" Norman 70. Note that Warder cites further arguments for the antiquity of these first two *vagga* based upon its *vatta* metre, following Oldenberg; Warder, *Pāli Metre,* 16; Warder also gives metrical reasons for considering the bulk of SuN old, 95, 98. Note that Kumoi Shōzen also appeals to the fact that SuN is usually held to be part of the very oldest layer of texts; Kumoi 78.

3001 For example, among verses in which *amata* or related ideas occur, we find, according to Norman's summary of the metres in ThaG, xxxiii-xxxiv, that verse 779 is in *triṣṭubh*, and verses 1103, 1110 and 1115 in a mixed *triṣṭubh-jagatī,* both of which are regarded as an old metres, *Pāli Lit.,* 66.

3002 DhP 21 (see above n. 363), 85-86, 114 (see n. 349), 225 (see n. 379), 259, 373-374 (see n. 357), 411 (see n. 375).

3003 Norman 59. Parts of the text are also in the *triṣṭubh-jagatī* metre, which Norman regards, following Warder, as indicative of an older layer of Pāli literature; Norman, *Pāli Lit.* 66.

3004 Vetter, *Ideas and Meditative Practices,* 7. In n. 1, he gives a broad range of sources for the *amata* pericopae, including Vinaya, *Mahāvagga* I p. 8 ff., MSV, *Lalitavistara, Mahāvastu,* T196 etc; also, for one part of his material, MN 26.

3005 On *amata* in MN 26, see n. 348.

Buddha's activities between leaving home and his conversion of the first five *bhikkhus.*[3006] Pande suggests that "the . . . narrative shows no obvious late features".[3007] Further passages might be considered early for lesser reasons. AN 9.14, *Samiddhi-sutta*,[3008] is considered early by Pande because of its use of an older sense of the term *nāma-rūpa.*[3009] MN 144, *Channovāda sutta*,[3010] is also said to be early by Pande.[3011]

The only text among our *amata* materials that is treated by Kingsbury using his statistical analysis of aorists is MN 34, *Cūḷagopālaka-sutta.*[3012] He assigned this text to the "middle" period.[3013]

On the other hand, only a few of the passages studied here for *amata* discourse are said to be late by any secondary authority. Thus, MN 64, *Mahāmālunkyaputta-sutta*,[3014] is held by Pande to

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[3006] For an argument that MN 26 is one of the oldest texts, see also Wynne, *Origin of Buddhist Meditation,* Ch. 2, esp. 16-26.

[3007] Pande 124; Pande adds, "an earlier form of this biographical tradition is not observable in the canon." Norman does not comment on the date of this text when he discusses it, 45. On *amata* in MN 26, see n. 348.

[3008] On AN 9.14, see above ns. 364, 369, 375.

[3009] It "seems to use *nāmarūpa* in the general and ancient sense in which it is used in the Upaniṣads and the *Sutta-nipāta* . . . . This suggests its earliness which is not contra-indicated;" Pande 245.

[3010] I did not treat MN 144 above, but it contains a chain of things one successively overcomes, beginning with the conceit of "me" or "mine" in the *skandhas,* and leading ultimately to the overcoming of "passing away and reappearing"; cited in Kim 98-99.

[3011] Pande notes that the rubric governing the catechistic structure of this text might be taken as an indication of lateness, but cites a passage with a "decidedly archaic flavour"; Pande 128-129, also table 179.

[3012] On *amata* in MN 34, see n. 348, 400.

[3013] Kingsbury, "Inducing a Chronology", 13; this table reproduces the results of his dissertation, for which see Kingsbury, PhD diss, 236

[3014] On *amata* in MN 64, see n. 354.

be late on the basis of certain doctrines.[3015] MN 75, *Māgandiya-sutta*,[3016] is held by Pande to be late because "it describes the early life of Gotama in a way which suggests that myth-making had already commenced to fill in the gaps in memory."[3017] Pande says that SN 22.87 (3.2.4.5), *Vakkali-sutta,*[3018] is probably rather late, though on quite speculative grounds.[3019] Pande holds SN 22.95 (3.2.5.3),[3020] to be "probably very late", on grounds that are unclear.[3021] With the possible exception of MN 138, the *Uddesavibhaṇga-sutta,*[3022] where Pande's reasons for considering the text late are founded on formal considerations,[3023] most of these judgments are based on hypotheses about the trajectory of doctrinal development. As we noted above in our general considerations about method, such criteria are the weakest grounds for dating material (because they risk circularity), and we must therefore give these judgments the least weight here.

[3015] Pande 135.

[3016] On *amata* in MN 75, see n. 354.

[3017] Pande 136. He then goes on to say, however, that the text contains some material that is apparently early!

[3018] On Māra, in the form of a black cloud, searching for Vakkali on his death and failing to find him, see above, p. 199.

[3019] Pande 229; Pande considers this text late because it uses the phrase *pūtikāya* of the Buddha, and he argues that "a latter day writer would hardly dare" to use such language of him.

[3020] On *amata* in SN 22.95, see above n. 357, 370, 377.

[3021] Pande may be basing himself on the fact that this text contains verses that also appear in Candrakīrti's commentary on *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*; 209 and n. 85.

[3022] On *amata* in MN 138, see n 351.

[3023] It falls in the *Vibhaṇga-vagga,* the texts of which are said to be late because they "foreshadow the method of analysis and classification found in the Abhidhamma".

Of course, we must also remember that for a good number of the texts we have surveyed, no firm claims have been made about dating at all by any of the secondary scholars we are using for this question.[3024]

In keeping with the judgments of Rhys Davids, Nishi, Kumoi and Vetter, then, the preponderance of the evidence argues that *amata* was indeed early, though it is a peculiar fact that it is not present in the earliest layers of DN and features only very marginally in DN at all. By contrast, there do not seem to be any strong grounds to associate it exclusively with a late stage of the teaching in any of our materials. On the other hand, *amata* doctrines feature regularly in texts also containing elements of mythology and doctrines of prior Buddhas, miracles, the stereotyped biography of the Buddha, and the thirty-two marks of the *mahāpuruṣa,* all of which are generally held to be characteristic of later Pāli-canonical developments. This seems to argue that there are no strong grounds for concluding that reference to *amata* necessarily waned later in the canonical period.

It must be remembered that for quite a large portion of the evidence we have examined here for the concept of *amata,* there do not seem to be strong grounds for forming any view on the relative date of the material. I do not see any reason to think, therefore, with Kumoi, that *amata* doctrine is somehow particularly characteristic of a very early stage in Buddhism; that its

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[3024] So MN 18, 52, 82, 106; almost all of our SN texts, i.e. 1.5.2, 3.2.7-8, 4.1.1, 4.3.4, 4.3.1, 6.1, 7.2.1 (7.11), 12.4.28, 22.1.1, 23.4, 45.1.1.8, 47.27, 48.44, 48.57, 56.11; almost all of our AN, i.e. AN 6.19 (6.2.9), 6.20 (6.2.10), 6.46 (6.5.4), 7.46 (7.5.6), 9.16 (9.2.6), 10.58 (10.6.8), 11.17 (11.2.6); SuN 5.16; ThaG 7 (see n. 403), 21 (see n. 349), 24, 30, 35 (see n. 362), 69 (see n. 352), 168 (see n. 375), 179 (see n. 375), 219 (see n. 383), 276 (see n. 383), 295-298 (see n. 363), 779 (382), 980 (see n. 362); see further 1059, 1103, 1108, 1110, 1115, 1243 (not discussed above); ThiG 97 (see n. 379), 222 (see n. 362), 495-513 (see n. 369). *Theragāthā* and *Therīgāthā* are thought by Norman to have been composed over a span of up to three centuries, Norman 74; and so it is impossible to consider how any material within them might bear on questions of the chronology of *amata* discourse without more specific evidence that might help date that specific passage in the text (e.g. metrical considerations; for the few instances where clear judgment seems possible on this score, see n. 3001).

presence in Buddhist discourse is especially due to Upaniṣadic and *śramaṇera* influence; that it is evidence of an early need to accommodate to the terms of non-Buddhist discourse, before Buddhism found its feet and its terminological independence; or that Buddhism lost interest in this discourse once it "matured" and consolidated the idiom of "orthodoxy". I also do not see much cause for arguments like those of Rhys Davids and Vetter that *amata* as a religious ideal predated *nibbāna* itself or the four noble truths. There does not seem to be any strong evidence that *amata* dropped out of the discourse in demonstrably later layers of the canon. Indeed, such arguments assume that we have the capacity to make very fine distinctions in the early layers of the canon, and run the same risk of circularity as any speculative models based primarily on theories of doctrinal trajectory without reference to doctrine-independent criteria (language, text-internal relations etc.) or the traditional chronology of the teachings.

It seems, then, that appeal to the notion of "undying" was entirely normal, mentioned in passing as an uncontroversial notion, from early in the tradition, and that it may well have remained a fairly constant *leitmotif* in the discourse throughout much of the canonical period. In other words, it was just a steady, unexciting and unobtrusive piece of the regular doctrinal décor for Pāli Buddhism as a whole.

App 1.3 Materials relating to *manomayakāya* (cf. Ch. 2.3)

I now turn to the consideration of the relative dating of materials relating to the concept of *manomayakāya*.

First, and most importantly, it is fairly clear that the concept of *manomayakāya* itself is roughly as early as anything else, according to the usual understanding of relative chronology of the Pāli canon. This is so, first, because it appears in DN 2 (*Sāmaññaphala-sutta*).[3025]

Pande treats DN 2 on the whole as very early, and for an impressive array of reasons. It is specifically mentioned in traditions regarding the first council; it was held in high esteem and circulated somewhat independently; the historical setting is authentic;[3026] it seems to contain quite early traditions about heresies, prior to later stylisations of "*diṭṭhis*"; many of the texts of the otherwise oldest *vagga* in DN, viz. DN.3-12, presuppose it in their present form;[3027] its *kāya-viññāṇa* analysis of human being may be earlier than the doctrine of five aggregates, which are not mentioned;[3028] and it shows early formal features.[3029]

Further evidence that the *manomayakāya* material found in DN 2, in particular, is early is found in the fact that the "snake slough" pericope about the *manomayakāya,* and indeed, the entire curriculum of practice and its fruits of which it is part, is attested quite widely in DN, and also found elsewhere in the Nikāyas (in MN 77).

[3025] See esp. p. 230 and §2.3.3 above.

[3026] Pande 83 n. 16, following Bapat.

[3027] Norman is more conservative on this question, noting that it is also possible that the list of practices recurring through these various texts "existed at first as an independent composition, from which all the suttas, including the *Sāmaññaphalasutta,* borrowed it;" 33. He regards the entire first *vagga,* however (incorporating DN 1-13) as the earliest stratum; 32.

[3028] "Man is conceived of as a complex of 'Kāya' and 'Viññāṇa';" Pande 84. Pande seems to have in mind passages like DN2.83, where, as we saw above, the monk, having progressed through the four *jhānas,* is said to know, "*This my body is material* (*rūpī*), made up from the four great elements, born of mother and father, fed on rice and gruel, impermanent, liable to be injured and abraded, broken and destroyed, and *this is my consciousness* which is bound to it and dependent on it" (Walshe 104; my emphases).

[3029] Pande 82-86. Note that even in the case of DN 2, however, Pande finds some reasons to regard certain restricted sections and features as later; 85-87.

Of course, as we saw in Ch. 2.3, the notion of *manomayakāya* is more complex than secondary literature to date has recognised, and the fact that the concept is present in this single context and sense in a very early layer of the material does not necessarily mean that all of the various applications of and doctrines about it are of equal antiquity. If we attempt to survey what Pande and Norman say about the relative dates of the other sources we have drawn on here, however, we find ourselves confronted with a paucity of solid information. Certainly, it makes sense to regard other texts in which the "snake slough" pericope (DN 3-12, MN 77) appears as of equal antiquity as DN 2, or at least those parts of the text that overlap with DN 2.[3030]

Things become more complex, however, even when we expand our view only so far as DN 9 (*Poṭṭhapāda-sutta*).[3031] As we saw above, this *sutta* beings by laying out the earlier part of the same path as DN 2, but then departs radically from it just at the juncture that is key for the notion of *manomaya*(*-atta*). Both Pande and Norman hold that this divergent material is a later addition precisely because of its difference from DN 2.[3032]

The only other texts among our sources about which Pande and/or Norman give specific hints regarding dating are the following. *Cullavagga* VII.1.4-5 of the *Vinaya,*[3033] we recall, contains the story of Kakudha, Moggallāna's attendant, coming back after death in a gigantic *manomayakāya.* This text appears in a part of the Vinaya that Pande places later than the Nikāyas but perhaps

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[3030] This assessment, of course, amounts to no more than assigning a relative date to the pericope rather than whole texts.

[3031] See p. 242 above.

[3032] Norman 35,

[3033] See p. 236 above.

prior to Aśoka.[3034] AN 11.2.13, "Nandiya",[3035] in which the Buddha commends mindfulness (*smṛti*) of *devas* who dwell in *manomayakāya* beyond the realm of gods sustained by material food, falls in a *vagga* declared "late" by Pande.[3036]

For the remaining bulk of the citations marshalled above, however, these authorities provide us with no information about relative dating whatsoever. We can observe some basic patterns in the distribution of our sources, however, which may enable us to make some small headway on the question of the relative dates of these various concepts of *manomayakāya.*

First, it is notable that some doctrines cluster, on the whole, in DN and occasionally MN. In addition to the "snake slough" pericope of DN 2 etc., DN also contains DN 9, with Poṭṭhapāda's mistaken doctrine of *manomayakāya* as one of his tripartite typology of *atta* (*ātman*). This idea is perhaps mirrored in DN 1. DN also contains the notion of the *devas* dwelling on bodies made of mind in the World of Radiance in the intermediate time between *kalpas* (DN 1, DN 24, DN 27).[3037]

These doctrines are by and large mostly confined to DN itself. The "snake slough" model occurs only in one place outside DN, namely MN 77. The cosmogonic views are also found, as we saw,

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[3034] Pande 15. This is one of two portions (the *Mahāvagga* and *Cullavagga*) of the *Khandhaka* of the Vinaya. Pande concludes in general that "it is not improbably that at least some parts of the KhV were composed in the time of Asoka." On this basis he further concludes, on the basis of both frequent reference and also stylistic and doctrinal considerations, that the bulk of the Nikāyas are at least a century older, in the 4C BCE. Norman has nothing specific to say about the relative date of this material. Further, "The silence of the Vinaya over the third Council suggests it had reached completion in the first two centuries A.B.", Pande 16.

[3035] See p. 240 above.

[3036] Pande declares the entirety of AN 11 late, 247, without actually have a section that treats specifically of AN 11 to explain why! He also complains that it is generally very difficult to ascertain stratification in AN, 234.

[3037] See p. 241 ff. above.

only once outside DN, at AN 10.3.29.[3038] Note that DN also contains one incidental mention, in DN 18 *Janavasabha-sutta*,[3039] of the doctrine that accomplished monks and great patrons[3040] may be reborn in elevated Heavens in the company of the *devas;* in the same text, we also find a basic, less specific form the doctrine that disciples of the Buddha will be reborn in "a heavenly world".[3041] These are troublesome facts to which I will return shortly.

Conversely, there are a number of important notions of *manomayakāya* that are only found *outside* DN, and seem to cluster in SN and AN in particular. Most particularly, it is striking that all but one instance, notions of *manomayakāya* as a post-mortem fate earned by accomplishments in practice[3042] are distributed elsewhere. Thus, Sāriputta is endorsed by the Buddha in his claim that accomplished monks are destined for a *manomayakāya* in such a world in AN 5.17.166. This is a notion which, as we have just recalled, receives incidental support in DN 18 (*Janavasabha-sutta*);[3043] it is also found in the story of Kakudha, in AN 5.10.100 and also the *Cullavagga* of the Vinaya.

Similarly, other, perhaps related doctrines are attested outside DN. The Buddha overtly asserts to Ānanda that he has visited the Brahmā Heaven in a *manomayakāya* in SN 51.7.3.2.[3044] It is at

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[3038] See p. 241 above.

[3039] See p. 235 above.

[3040] As already noted above (n 520), Janavasabha himself is a reincarnation of Bimbisāra.

[3041] See p. 237 above.

[3042] See p. 234 ff. above for all of the passages discussed in this paragraph as evidence of this doctrine.

[3043] See p. again 237 above.

[3044] See p. 237 above.

AN 5.5.44[3045] that Ugga is portrayed as having been reborn in a *manomayakāya* among *devas* as a result of his exemplary *dāna*.[3046] It is probably also a related fact that the Buddha also instructs Nandiya to mindful of *devas,* as objects of Buddhist devotion, in AN 11.2.13.[3047]

On the basis of this distribution of the evidence, it seems to me that we are justified in provisionally conjecturing at least two phases in the development of the notion of *manomayakāya* in Buddhist contexts, exemplified by two relatively coherent clusters of concepts.

In the earlier of these two phases, represented by doctrines that tend to cluster in DN, we find a cluster of associations whereby *manomaya* is (1) an attribute of a *kāya* elaborated in the here and now by Buddhist practitioners as an intermediate and instrumental part of a path of practice; (2) predicated erroneously of a putative "self" by non-Buddhist interlocutors; (3) predicated of bodies of beings as part of a cosmogonical narrative about a remote epoch in cosmological time. Note that this would tend to fit with the idea that *manomaya* is initially part of a body of received ideas that Buddhism inherits as part of the general cultural landscape, as suggested e.g. by the *Tattirīya Upaniṣad* passage examined above. We might speculate that it is a concept current among non-Buddhists, which arises in polemical contexts, and is in part appropriated and reinterpreted by Buddhist discourse as realisable in the here and now as part of the new Buddhist vision of spiritual practice.

[3045] See p. 239 above.

[3046] As we have seen, DN 18 also incidentally seems to hold out the promise of such an exalted destiny for great lay patrons, through the example of Bimbisāra/Janavasabha; see ns. 520, 3040.

[3047] See p. 240 above.

In the later of these two phases, represented by doctrines that tend to cluster in SN, AN, etc. we perhaps see a kind of "domestication" of the concept of *manomayakāya,* whereby its non-Buddhist associations fade into the background and it is incorporated more broadly into a Buddhist worldview. This may happen in conjunction with several other factors: (1) a possible increased interest in tracking the reincarnational fate of known persons through multiple lifetimes;[3048] (2) an increased emphasis on the exploration of diachronic cosmology, perhaps in conjunction with a synchronic cosmology opened up by meditative attainments (the Buddha's journeying to Brahmā Heaven) and inklings of a Buddhist pantheon (devotion to *devas* among other objects in AN 11.2.13 "Nandiya"); (3) the elaboration of more overt and extensive discourse about the virtues of lay charity and patronage (Ugga, Bimbisāra). Such developments would be in keeping with broad speculation that has been advanced in prior scholarship about trends in the development of doctrine over time in the Pāli materials.

Amidst this broad pattern, I confess I have no idea where to begin chronologically classifying anomalies like the appearance of the Buddha in a *manomayakāya* to Anuruddha,[3049] or the confusing treatment of speculative post-mortem destinies found in the *Apaṇṇaka-sutta*.[3050]

We must bear in mind that even such a vague hypothesis about relative dating in these materials is very speculative, however, and we must also note certain facts that forbid us from exaggerating the tidiness of this picture.

[3048] As in the *jātakas,* of course, but also the Buddha's pronouncements of the post-mortem fate of disciples, as figured in DN 18.

[3049] See p. 238 above.

[3050] See p. 245 above.

For example, as mentioned above, DN 18 (*Janavasabha-sutta*) contains ideas (the exaltation of monks and laypersons to heavens, and the corresponding implicit synchronic cosmology) that otherwise appear only outside DN. To maintain the present hypothesis, we must therefore either speculate that DN 18 itself is a later layer of DN,[3051] or else much of our relative chronology crumbles into ruins. I have not yet found any information that would give solid grounds for preferring either alternative, and therefore the above two-phase model must be treated with caution. Similarly, DN 2 (*Sāmaññaphala-sutta*), without actually mentioning specifically the *ārūpya* realm or *manomayakāya,* already contains in a simple form the doctrine that accomplished adherents to Buddhist teachings will be reborn in "a heavenly realm".

Another difficulty potential difficulty is found in the fact the majority of the "cosmogonic" references (to beings in the intermediate age between *kalpas*) are found in the third *vagga* of DN. According to Norman[3052] and Pande, whom Norman seems to follow in this regard, this third *vagga* contains the latest stratum of material within DN itself, and it is possible therefore that the "cosmogonic" application of the notion of *manomayakāya,* like what I have called "synchronic cosmological" material, belongs in a later phase of the relative chronology of the canon. Even this suggestion, however, is further complicated in turn by the fact that reference to this "cosmogonic" model is also found in DN 1 (*Brahmajāla-sutta*); we would thus either have to split DN 1 off from the rest of the first *vagga,* otherwise regarded as very early, or else concede that the "cosmogonic" material is early after all![3053]

[3051] Norman posits stratification within DN itself; *Pāli Literature* 32.

[3052] Norman 32.

[3053] On the likely date of DN 1, see n. 3063.

A third difficulty that threatens to undermine any tidy chronological grouping of these *manomayakāya* materials is that we should not necessarily expect doctrines of this or any other concept to be coherent in a given period of doctrinal history. Indeed, it seems historically far more plausible to expect that in such a multifarious body of stratified materials we will rather encounter vestiges of numerous different positions and interpretations. The canon would then be as much a fragmentary record of internal debates as it is of some putative "orthodoxy". This consideration bears most closely upon the speculation that the portion of DN 9 (*Poṭṭhapāda-sutta*) incorporating *manomayakāya* must, in light of its deviation from the DN 2 "snake slough" model, represent a later stage of doctrinal development. As I argued briefly above, it is also possible that DN 9 represents an intellectual gambit on the part of some portion of the tradition to argue a more gnostic, *anātmavāda*-centred interpretation of the path to liberation, and that the earlier members of the DN 2 path have been appropriated to this end. There is no reason for us to assume, if such a scenario is conceivable, that the DN 2 model is necessarily chronologically prior to DN 9, unless perhaps because such appropriation would presuppose that the DN 2 model was already at least authoritative enough for its appropriation to be rhetorically powerful. Similar arguments may apply, *mutatis mutandis,* to other perceived "inconsistencies" and divergences between the various notions of *manomayakāya* we have examined, and make the effort to discern any relative chronology in the materials all the more shaky.

The problem of dating these ideas relative to the Pāli canon as a whole, therefore, rapidly becomes quite convoluted, and I will here leave off the further pursuit of these difficulties, to summarise the conclusions I think we can safely carry away from this discussion for the purposes of our larger questions. The most important points about relative dates of these materials revealed by these discussions are the following.

First, at least some significant part of the diverse and complex notion of *manomayakāya* in the Pāli-canonical materials must be quite early, as evidenced by the presence of the notion in the first *vagga* of DN, etc. It is obviously for this reason that I have treated *manomayakāya* in the context of Chapter 2 of this dissertation, which as a whole concentrates upon the earliest ideas available to us relating to the problematic of embodiment.

Second, there is nothing about the conception of *manomayakāya* that we can most clearly identify as relatively early, namely that embedded in the "snake slough" model of reembodiment laid out in DN 2, that relates the concept particularly to Buddhas. There is, indeed, relatively little material that suggests any special connection between any conception of *manomayakāya* and Buddhas, and conversely, quite a lot of material that associates it at least sometimes with a range of other beings, not all of them perfected in Buddhist terms. Thus, the overall association between *manomayakāya* and Buddhas is at best weak and even incidental, and at worst, there are counterindications that suggest that a *manomayakāya* would in fact be precisely inadequate to the exalted state of a Buddha as the paramount being. However, even insofar as Buddhas are associated with *manomayakāya,* our evidence suggests that such was probably not the earliest emphasis of the term.

App 1.4 Materials relating to the "body of marks" (cf. Ch. 3.1)

We now turn to the examination of the dates of materials attesting the idea of the thirty-two marks of the *mahāpuruṣa,* and related ideas. With these ideas, we leave behind the materials I consider datable to the earliest layers of the Pāli-canonical materials, and turn to materials that seem to on the whole more characteristic of a later layer within those materials. This means, of

course, that we also turn from materials covered in Chapter 2 of this dissertation to materials covered in Chapter 3.

Few of the scholars who have considered the doctrine of the thirty-two marks have distinguished adequately between that doctrine as it is presented in the Pāli sources, and as it is presented in (almost universally later) sources in other languages. Fewer scholars still have attempted an analysis of the dating of these materials relative to other ideas on the Pāli materials,[3054] and it is difficult to be satisfied with the work of those who have attempted such an analysis.

The most detailed attempt along these lines is that of Wimalaratana, who attempts to place some of the passages we have studied in a kind of chronological order. However, his reasons for the order he suggests are speculative and not necessarily helpful, being seemingly based predominantly on a conjectured unilinear development of *mahāpurisa* doctrine itself. For example, he places the AN 4.4.35 *Vassakāra-sutta* later than *Sutta-nipāta* references to the doctrine of the *mahāpurisa,*[3055] in part on the basis of the fact that the term is applied not just to the Arahant but also to the Buddha, and also that AN 4.4.35 includes concern for the welfare of others, which he takes to reflect "a gradual development and a complete or overall

[3054] Guang Xing might seem to be an exception to this assertion, since he lists three "early *suttas*" in which the thirty-two major marks of the *mahāpuruṣa* are mentioned; Guang 190 n. 54, referring to DN 14, DN 30, and MN 91. Here as elsewhere, however, his notion of "early" seems no more precise than that these texts are (in this case fairly broadly) included in the *nikāya* and *āgama* corpora. For some reason, Guang also indiscriminately lumps in with these "early" sources, without much indication of reasons to distinguish them, the *Mūlasarvāstivādavinaya,* the *Mahāvastu*, the **Abhiniṣkramaṇasūtra* (despite the fact that the Chinese translation dates only from the Sui (it was translated by Jñānagupta in 583, and that Guang himself notes that it includes some apparently very late layers, e.g. mention of Mahāvairocana etc.).

[3055] " . . . another step in the development of the Buddhist concept of *mahāpurisa*", 17; "in this discourse . . . Buddha defines the concept of *mahāpurisa,* giving it a wider meaning than the earlier one", 19.

development of the individual".[3056] We have frequent occasion to note in this dissertation that where judgements of "early" and "late" rest in this manner upon conjectures about doctrinal development rather than independent considerations, we cannot lend much weight to them, and for these reasons, Wimalaratana's attempts to chronologise ideas about the *mahāpurisa* are of little use to us.

We encounter a slightly different problem, though one just as serious, when we turn to the judgements made by scholars of the relative chronology of the canon as a whole regarding texts containing the ideas under study here. Here, too, the basic problem is that conjectures about doctrinal development are given undue weight. Against Wimalaratana's attempt to identify an internal logic of development *within* those ideas, here, the doctrine of the thirty-two marks is rather taken almost axiomatically as a strong indicator of a certain phase of development in the larger chronology of Buddhist ideas as a whole.

Pande, in particular, considers this very doctrine of the marks to be part of an "apotheosis of the Buddha", which he considers "the most far-reaching theological trend" in the development of the ideas contained in the *nikāyas*.[3057] Pande is so firm in his understanding that this doctrine was "quite foreign to the earliest texts" that he uses it as one of his primary yardsticks for

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[3056] Wimalaratana 19. Similarly, Wimalaratana then sees the DN 14 treatment as later in turn than AN 4.4.35 because the "social aspect" is "elaborated in great detail" (he does not say exactly why he thinks this), so forming a "link between early and later strata of the Pali Canon"; 19. It is not clear, given that Wimalaratana is quite taciturn about whether he assumes historical accretion of the texts at multiple hands or whether he rather assents to the traditional ascription of all canonical texts to the Buddha himself, if we are to take this confused analysis to mean that the tradition gradually came to understand Buddhahood as more altruistic and the Buddha as an external saviour, or whether it perhaps means rather that the Buddha somehow grew more altruistic over the years succeeding his awakening, such that the SN text is "later" in the frame of the Buddha's preaching career but still prior to his death.

[3057] Pande 29-30.

identifying chronological strata in the texts in the first place.[3058] This is the case, among the texts we considered in Ch. 3.1, with many of the most significant texts: DN 3-5, DN 14, MN 91,[3059] MN 92,[3060] and DN 30 (though, as we shall see, DN 30 is judged late for sounder reasons also).

For our current purposes, where we are attempting to find independent criteria by which to examine precisely the question of the relative antiquity of ideas of the *mahāpurisa* and his marks (and therefore of texts containing those ideas), this methodology obviously begs the question. In what follows, therefore, I attempt to examine the question of relative dates for these texts in a manner independent of posits about doctrinal development, insofar as it is possible in the current state of such studies.[3061]

From this point of view, it is vital that we note, against assumptions that these doctrines are uniformly late, that there are in fact good reasons to consider some of the texts under consideration somewhat early, and we must therefore think that parts of the complex of ideas about marks and the *mahāpurisa* are also early. I begin by considering this apparently earliest evidence. To forestall possible confusion for my readers, I should note before beginning the summary of this evidence that I will argue below that the evidence that shows these ideas to be early, though it can be found, is relatively slight, and that the balance of the evidence suggests

[3058] Norman also makes remarks on occasion that show he considers the idea of the thirty-two marks grounds to judge a text late, as we shall see. Associated with the marks in this Buddhological complex, for Pande, are also: the degradation of the Arhat; mention of previous and future Buddhas; birth miracles and a standardised Buddha biography governed by *dhammatā*; the great extension of *stūpa* worship.

[3059] Pande 136, 179.

[3060] "This tendency to effect comparisons between Buddha and the universal monarch which is exhibited in other forms in DN 16 [i.e. MPNS] appears to be only a stage in his apotheosis. The sutta appears late" (170-171). Pande nonetheless lists this text as "uncertain" in date.

[3061] As elsewhere, where the secondary scholars I rely upon for dating questions give no information bearing on the date of a text, I will simply silently omit it from the discussion.

that ideas about the marks and the *mahāpurisa* cannot be ascribed to the early period with the same confidence as the ideas treated in Chapter 2 (about the given body, *amata* and *manomayakāya*). It is for this reason, of course, that I treat the marks in the present chapter.

DN 1, the *Brahmajāla-sutta,*[3062] which mentions physiognomic arts among the techniques rejected by the Buddha, is usually though to contain material among the earliest strata of the canon.[3063] DN 2,[3064] which contains similar ideas, is if anything perhaps even earlier as a whole.[3065] SuN 3.11 v. 679-698,[3066] in which Kaṇhasiri prophesies the infant's future Buddhahood on the basis of a resemblance to gold, comprises verses mostly in "an extended form of Triṣṭubh (occasionally mixed with extended Jagatī) . . ."; we have had occasion elsewhere to note that this mixture of metres is considered old.[3067] Similarly, SuN 5.1[3068] contains two verses in the same old metres. Norman notes, however, against this suggestion of an early date, that it is not commented on in *Niddesa* II, "which possibly means that [these verses] did not exist at the

[3062] For DN 1 in connection to the doctrine of marks, see above p. 306.

[3063] As with DN 2, one indication that this *sutta* is early is the fact that only those two texts are mentioned in canonical accounts of the first council. It also presents the *paṭiccasamuppāda* in an earlier form, according to Pande's chronology of these doctrines, and omits other doctrines Pande considers standard for later periods; Pande 81. Against this, however, Pande finds reason to believe that the whole *sutta,* in its present form, has undergone a considerable editorial process, including, most tellingly in my opinion, the fact that the *sīlas* are found in three forms (*cūla, majjhima, mahā*), the last two of which are an expansion on the first.

[3064] For DN 2 in connection to the doctrine of marks, see above n. 677.

[3065] On the several reasons for considering DN 2 early, see p. 1427.

[3066] See above p. 315.

[3067] Norman, *Group of Discourses* 301. Note that e.g. v. 688, which is in mixed *triṣṭubh-jagatī*, and refers to invisible gods holding fans and an umbrella; this flies in the face of Pande's assumption that supernatural or miraculous powers or events attendant upon the Buddha indicate a late apotheosis. On *triṣṭubh-jagatī* as early, see Norman, *Pāli Lit.* 66, and n. 3000, 3002, and 3003 of this dissertation.

[3068] See above p. 317.

time of the compilation of Nidd II, or were perhaps not regarded as being an authentic part of the text at that time."[3069]

The situation is somewhat more complex with DN 3-5.[3070] All of these texts include knowledge of the *mahāpurisalakkhaṇa* in the list of lore mastered by an ideal Brāhmin; all assert that the Buddha has the thirty-two marks, though without listing them.[3071] DN 3 further states that one with the marks will become either a *cakravartirāja* or a Buddha, and portrays the Buddha assuring Brāhmins that he has the marks of the genitalia and the tongue, in the former case by supernatural means. Both Norman and Pande are inclined to consider the inclusion of the doctrine of thirty-two marks in these texts a sign of relative lateness.[3072] Pande, however, bases his claim that these *suttas* are later ("more developed"[3073]) than DN 1 & 2 entirely on doctrinal grounds,[3074] with the exception of the claim that it, as with a number of *suttas* in this *vagga* (DN 3-12), textually borrows from and presupposes DN 2.[3075] Absent these doctrinal grounds, the case for the lateness of these *suttas* is very weak. We must bear in mind, on the other hand, that

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3069 Norman, *Group of Discourses* 395. The metre in all verses in this text is *śloka* except for 995 (mixed Triṣṭubh/Jagatī/Śloka) and 996 (Jagatī).

3070 See above n. 680, and also p. 319.

3071 Pande states that DN 4 and 5 do not contain any reference to the number thirty-two, 87; this, however, seems to be incorrect, as mentioned above n. 717.

3072 Norman 34, Pande 87.

3073 Pande 87.

3074 The doctrinal considerations upon which Pande bases his conclusions are that these texts contain the doctrine of the marks, and supernatural powers. Pande further hints that DN 4, in particular, may be earlier than DN 3 and 5, saying that it is, as he puts it, "free from miracle and myth", and "the most logical" of the group. He sensibly stops short of drawing any overt conclusion to this effect, however: "Since, however, the correlation between the growth of the miraculous, of the Jātaka-form and of 'dialectics' among the early Buddhists is as yet a quite uncertain subject, it is impossible to attempt a minuter stratification between these three suttas"; 87.

3075 Pande 87.

these *suttas* nonetheless appear in the first *vagga* of DN,[3076] which is early as a whole. Norman, for example, states in another connection that in the context of DN as a whole, "late" never means *very* late, for any part of the Nikāya.[3077]

Finally, we might also note for the sake of completeness that SN 1.30,[3078] which praises the Buddha as the one with the "antelope calves", is found in the *Sagāthaka-vagga* of SN, which is usually thought on the whole to be the earliest material in SN as a whole, though this is no guarantee, of course, that every verse it contains is early.

If we survey this body of probably early texts as a whole, we can see that at least the following components of the overall complex of ideas concerning marks and the *mahāpurisa* are early (listed in rough order of strength of evidence that they are in fact early):

- that the Buddha was marked at birth by some association with gold (SuN 3.11);
- that the Buddha's greatness (but perhaps not the possibility that he would alternately become a *cakravartirāja*) was prophesied at birth by a seer (SuN 3.11);
- that there is an art of physiognomy that Buddhism rejects (DN 1 & 2);
- that knowledge of the marks of a *mahāpurisa* is part of Brāhmaṇical lore (SuN 5.1, DN 3-5);
- that one so marked will become either a *cakravartirāja* or a Buddha (SuN 5.1, DN 3);

[3076] DN 3, further, was considered important enough to warrant independent translation into Chinese (T20); Pande elsewhere considers similar independent translations an indication of the earliness of DN 1 and 2; Pande 81, 82.

[3077] See n. 3094.

[3078] See above p. 317.

- the marks of the genitals and tongue (SuN 5.1, DN 3), and the *urṇa* (SuN 5.1 only), also in association with beings other than the Buddha (SuN 5.1 only);
- that there are thirty-two marks (DN 3-5), which are however unlisted;
- that Brāhmins scrutinised the Buddha for the marks, and he undertook special measures to assure them that he indeed had the marks of the genitals and the tongue (DN 3);
- the mark of the antelope calves (SN 1.30).

This list is, strikingly, quite full. The only significant elements missing from the overall complex as we surveyed it in Ch. 3.1 above are the list of specific marks, the ascription of the marks to the merit accrued in prior lives as a *bodhisattva,* and – most notably – the "ethical" ideal of the *mahāpurisa.*[3079]

The texts whose dates we have considered thus far, as evidence for an "early" phase in the *mahāpurisa* complex, are admittedly relatively few, and do not seem to comprise an impressive base for arguing the dating of these ideas. It is noteworthy, however, that it is very difficult to find any texts containing parts of the *mahāpurisa* complex for which there is firm evidence for a later dating, so that the pattern of late attestation indicated by this body of texts as a whole is not undermined by any significant counterexamples.

Several texts seem to fall in what might be loosely called a "middle" stratum of the Pāli materials. For example, MN 93[3080] is taken by Pande as late because of the apparent reference to

[3079] Of course, absence from those texts that happen to be datable does not necessarily mean an idea is therefore late; to think so would merely be to propound an argument from silence. But we will also see below that the one text containing an "ethical" idea of the *mahāpurisa* that *is* possibly datable is in fact late.

[3080] See above n. 680.

Greeks;[3081] but, as Kingsbury notes, this might not necessarily even make it as "late" as Aśoka.[3082] Similarly, MN 100[3083] is dated by Kingsbury's aorist test as belonging to the "middle" stratum.[3084] MN 95, the *Cankī-sutta,*[3085] is likewise identified by Kingsbury's test as "middle".[3086] Texts other than those already mentioned above from SuN might also be included in this group, since SuN as a whole is generally considered relatively old,[3087] but the verses in the specific texts in question are in plain *śloka,* which means there is no special reason to regard them as especially early within SuN. This group includes SuN 5.3 v. 1040-1042,[3088] which contains a mention of the ethical notion of *mahāpurisa*;[3089] and SuN 3.7 (and therefore MN 92 and ThaG 818-841, which duplicate all or part of the text).[3090]

We might also include in this group the curious case of DN 14, the *Mahâpadāna-sutta.*[3091] This text, we recall, contains ideas about six prior Buddhas, a stereotyped Buddha biography in

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[3081] Yona, Ñāṇamoli 764; Pande 137.

[3082] Kingsbury 51.

[3083] See above n. 680.

[3084] Kingsbury 236.

[3085] See above n. 680, 718.

[3086] Kingsbury 236.

[3087] See Warder, *Pāli Metre* 95, 98, for arguments on metrical grounds that the bulk of SuN is as early as anything known in Pāli literature.

[3088] See above p. 311.

[3089] Note that in Wimalaratana's scheme, this is the oldest mention of the concept of *mahāpurisa;* 13. Certainly, the fact, as we saw above (p. 312), that this text is cited by name in AN 6.6.61, "The Way to the Beyond", and further commented upon the late canonical *Niddesa,* is strong evidence that it cannot be particularly late.

[3090] See above p. 316.

[3091] See above p. 320.

accordance with *dhammatā,* and miracles attending on the birth of a Buddha as part of this boilerplate biography, including the possession of the thirty-two marks. It is further one of three texts in the canon that actually lists the marks, the first such text we have considered in this analysis of relative dates. Pande, in accordance with his usual assumptions about the direction of doctrinal development, considers the *sutta* late on the basis of these criteria; he also suggests that the inclusion of the word *apadāna* in the title also indicates that the text is late.[3092] On the other hand, however, Pande also notes that the *paṭiccasamuppāda* realised in the text by the first Buddha, Vipassin, has only ten links, not twelve, which, according to his usual assumptions about doctrinal development, would make the text early.[3093] The text further falls in the *Mahā-vagga* of DN, and Norman considers this *vagga* "later than the *suttas* of the first *vagga*", but not especially late even so.[3094] We should further note, as neither Pande nor Norman do, that the text is extensively attested in Chinese translations, both as part of larger Āgama collections and independently. As Jan Nattier notes, this means that we have versions of the text from "Theravāda" and the Dharmaguptaka and Mahāsāṃghika schools, so that it must predate schism between those schools.[3095] It seems, then, that when evaluated against supposed trajectories of doctrinal development, DN 14 is caught in a tug-of-war between conflicting assumptions about different elements of doctrine, but that the slender hold independent criteria (such as underpin Norman's caveat) gives us on the date of the text urge that it cannot be so late as circular arguments from doctrinal criteria would suggest. In here assigning it to a "middle" stratum, therefore, I make no pretence at precision, but rather mean

[3092] Pande 94.

[3093] Pande 95. Norman echoes Pande's arguments, *Pāli Lit.*, 36.

[3094] See, for example, Norman's gloss of his own suggestion that the third *vagga* is "comparatively late", where he says, "The word 'comparatively' must be emphasised. The fact that versions of the *suttas* of the Dīgha-nikāya are found in the canons of other sects shows that the *nikāya,* as a whole, must have been composed within a century or so of the Buddha's death" (n. 60, p. 41).

[3095] Nattier, *Once Upon a Future Time* 19-20, n. 17.

simply that there are no firm reasons for thinking it any later than what we are here calling "middle".

In contrast to these texts apparently datable to early and middle strata of the canon, there is in fact very little among our material that can be firmly dated as relatively late. I was only able to find good independent grounds for such a dating for two texts, among all the texts treated above.[3096]

First, MN 151, the *Piṇḍapātapārisuddha-sutta,*[3097] is dated "late" by Kingsbury's aorist test.[3098] This result is of potentially quite significant, given the fact that MN 151 contains an "ethical" doctrine of *mahāpurisa,* and is the only text containing such an "ethical" doctrine that I could find any independent grounds for dating. Obviously, given the relatively great variety we observed among different "ethical" visions of the *mahāpurisa,* we should be cautious about inferring too much from one instance to others, since to do so may be to compare apples and pears. It is nonetheless noteworthy that, *pace* doctrinaire assumptions that "ethical" visions of *mahāpurisa* must be authentic and so early, the best independent evidence we have rather suggests that at least this vision is late.

Second, DN 30, the *Lakkhaṇa-sutta* itself,[3099] is said by Norman to be rather late on the rich and doctrine-independent grounds[3100] that it contains late metres, and "shows a greater variety of

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[3096] One possible minor addition to this count is the *Mahāparinibbāna-sutta,* DN 16, which refers to the golden complexion of the Buddha (though not in any specific connection with a doctrine of marks) is known as a complex stratified text, and it may contain quite late material.

[3097] See above p. 312.

[3098] Kingsbury 236.

[3099] See above p. 321.

metres than any other canonical text, all of them being, moreover, either new classical types of metre or classical forms of old metres".[3101] Pande concurs.[3102]

To summarise, when we absent preconceptions about the trajectory of doctrinal development, and confine ourselves to what is suggested by doctrine-independent evidence, there is very *little* reason for seeing as especially late the following ideas: (1) the idea of physiognomy *per se;* (2) Buddhist traditions that such lore was a part of the Brāhmaṇical curriculum; (3) the ascription of special physical marks of some kind to the Buddha; prophecies at his birth made on their basis; (4) the tradition that the bearer of such marks would meet one of two wondrous destinies; (5) the numbering of thirty-two such marks; (6) the ascription to the Buddha (and Bāvari) of the marks of the genitals and tongue in particular; or (7) the story of the Buddha verifying those marks to sceptical Brāhmins. There are, further and very notably, *no* independent grounds for the common assertion that the "ethical" ideal of the *mahāpurisa* is earlier or more central to the tradition, and that the physically marked *mahāpurisa* is therefore some kind of later compromise with demotic forces. In fact, the evidence we do have would seem to suggest that if either notion was earlier, it was precisely the physical (and that the "ethical" might be a later rationalisation!). The only parts of the overall complex that there *are* solid reasons to think late are those confined to DN 30, i.e. the explanation of marks as the result of past merit and the identification of the particular type of merit that led to each mark; and the specific "ethical" ideal of "abiding in emptiness".

[3100] Norman also argues that it is late on the basis of its doctrine.

[3101] Norman, *Pāli Lit.* 42.

[3102] " . . . belongs manifestly to a very late stratum in the *nikāyas*", 112, for the same reasons.

By the same token, with the possible exception of SuN 3.11 tradition of a variant birth prophecy and the DN 1 & 2 tradition that physiognomy of some kind was included among arts rejected by the Buddha, we have been able to find little that would firmly date these ideas very early in the tradition. For this reason, it seems that the evidence regarding dating we have considered here falls short of warranting a complete overturn of the generalisations of previous scholars, who see in the doctrine of the thirty-two marks a "later" development and attempt to push it right back to the inception of the tradition. I have therefore still decided to treat these ideas about the *mahāpurisa* and his marks as slightly later than the earliest Buddhism, and therefore included them in the present chapter rather than Chapter 2 of this dissertation.

However, "later" here clearly does *not* mean "at the very latest end of the Pāli-canonical period", but rather, only "somewhat later than the very beginning", and that it is highly likely that aspects of the doctrines treated in Chapter 2 – those ideas about *manomayakāya,* mindfulness of the body, or *sakkāyadiṭṭhi* that we identified as probably relatively later, for example – overlap chronologically with parts of the materials considered here. To some degree, that is to say, the separation of materials in the present chapter and Chapter 2 is an expository convenience, which oversimplifies a complex situation in the actual texts.

With this provisos, it seems that in sum, we can provisionally conclude that the doctrine of the *mahāpurisa* and his marks developed in three broad and unequal phases.

At the earliest phase, it seems clear that there was a vague idea in Buddhist circles that non-Buddhists practised physiognomic arts (DN 1 & 2).[3103] At the same time, it seems, there were

[3103] I deliberately leave open the question of whether this corresponds to any objective historical reality. However, it is difficult to think of any reason for Buddhists to hold this if it were not in fact true. I can also think of no reason to think that physiognomy might *not* have been practised in Indian society

also already inklings of the application of such general notions to the Buddha, and an understanding that his exceptional spiritual status must have been marked by unspecified exceptional qualities of his physical person (SuN 3.11).

Quite soon in the tradition, these general notions were elaborated into more concrete notions of the specific marks that set the Buddha apart. We might plausibly see a prototypical step in this direction, prior to the elaboration of the "standard" model of thirty-two marks, in SuN 3.7/MN 92.[3104] We might also speculate that the attribution of the marks of genitals, tongue and *urṇa* to Bāvari (SuN 5.1) is a vestige of prototypical materials, since it goes against the tendency to emphasise the unique status of the Buddha. These marks also could therefore possibly predate the full list of thirty-two.

Absent such risky speculative reconstructions of doctrinal-historical logic, however, we have no independent criteria for separating out any chronological priority between these ideas and the related, more standard ideas that there are thirty-two marks, that knowledge of these marks is a part of standard Brāhmaṇical lore, and that the Buddha had those marks on his person. We should therefore ascribe these marks to roughly the same second phase of development. Around the same time, we also see the story of the verification of those marks by learned Brāhmins (DN 3 etc.). This tradition specifically mentions the marks of the genitals and tongue, and this special treatment may retain an echo of an originally independent provenance of these marks, which we speculated remains in the Bāvari story (SuN 5.1). Around the same

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generally in this epoch, even if such practices did not make their way into the non-Buddhist record until later.

[3104] See, once more, p. 316 above.

time, also, it seems, the evidence of SuN 5.3 v. 1040-1042 suggests that the appropriation of the concept of *mahāpurisa* to describe ethical ideals had also begun.

In a final third phase, we see the application of a logic of merit to the marks, and the ascription of marks on the present body to the causative power of acts in past *bodhisattva* lifetimes of the Buddha. We also see the full itemised list of the thirty-two marks, rather than the simple assertion that there are thirty-two unspecified marks. These ideas are quite probably later than most of the above developments, since they are only attested in DN 30, which is dated late on the independent grounds of metre.

Appendix 2 (to Chapter 5.1): Possible connections between alchemical ideas and the notion of the Buddha's immortal embodiment in adamant

He wanted to feel the same way over and over.

He wanted the river to go on flowing the same way,
To keep on flowing. He wanted to walk beside it,

Under the buttonwoods, beneath a moon nailed fast.
He wanted his heart to stop beating and his mind to rest

In a permanent realisation, without any wild ducks
Or mountains that were not mountains, just to know how it would be,

Just to know how it would feel, released from destruction,
To be a bronze man breathing under archaic lapis,

Without the oscillation of planetary pass-pass,
Breathing his bronzen breath at the azury centre of time.

--- Wallace Stevens, "This Solitude of Cataracts"

1. Introduction

In Chapter 5.1 of this dissertation we traced the rise of two sets of initially independent but ultimately related ideas: that the Buddhas have an extremely long lifespan; and that the body of the Buddha is *like* adamant. We saw that by the period witnessed by translations in the Chinese record from around 400 C.E., these ideas had further developed and come together in the idea that Śākyamuni Buddha, the Buddha of our world, is utterly immortal, so that his apparent *parinirvāṇa* was merely a docetistic show, and that his body, as befits that immortality, *is made* of adamant, that is, is a *vajrakāya.*

At the end of the conclusions to that section, I noted that the period in which the ideas of Śākyamuni's immortality and the *vajrakāya* are first witnessed in the Chinese record is also the period in which we see in the same record the first signs of the impact of alchemical ideas on Buddhist texts – specifically, ideas about aurifaction (the manufacture of gold) and the attainment of immortality by elixirs. I suggested that while there is ample evidence that the

idea of the Buddha's immortal embodiment in adamant developed out of a number of factors internal to Buddhist thought itself, it is also possible that these alchemical ideas may have been another factor in those developments. The purposes of this Appendix is to examine that possibility further.

This study will necessitate close engagement with relevant parts of Joseph Needham's *Science and Civilisation in China*, in which he made seminal studies of the history of alchemy. Needham's central claim is that a complex of alchemical ideas and practices first arose in China around the beginning of the common era and was then diffused to other civilisations in Eurasia. A part of my task in this Appendix, therefore, will be to examine the evidence for Needham's theory in the Buddhist record. Needham himself attempted to make use of some Buddhist evidence, which he had via Waley, but even Waley failed to catch all the relevant data in the Chinese canon, and Needham's use of it is sometimes based upon ill-founded assumptions about the date, meaning and so on of relevant passages. I therefore attempt to provide a better survey and account of the evidence for the impingement of ideas about aurifaction and immortality by elixirs than has previously been assembled in one study.

I will argue that Needham's own evidence for the earliest part of his narrative of diffusion is often weak, and that on the sole basis of the evidence he himself adduces, we might have reason to doubt that the diffusion took place as early as he claims, even though he can certainly show that many of the ideas he studies were strikingly earlier in China than elsewhere.

However, I will go on to argue that the new evidence for the impingement of ideas about immortality by elixirs and aurifaction on the Buddhist world that I have discovered in the Chinese Buddhist record shows that Needham may well have been right for the wrong reasons.

It is difficult, in the face of that evidence, to deny that those ideas are strikingly absent in the Buddhist world until the fourth century, and then appear to have gained quite broad currency in a short time; given that these ideas are demonstrably older in China, this could be evidence of the kind of diffusion Needham proposes.

Third, I will argue that a third arm of Needham's supposed alchemical complex, namely, ritual sexual practices or techniques for the management of sexual energies towards the goal of immortality (or "salvation" more broadly), is on the whole strikingly absent in the Buddhist materials of the same period (despite claims by some scholars to the contrary), and that there are therefore strong grounds for supposing that in this early period, (a) the association between such sexual practices and other elements of "alchemy" was not so close or necessary as Needham seems to suppose, the striking counterevidence of Ge Hong's *Bao pu zi* for the Chinese case notwithstanding; or (b) that the Buddhist evidence may not be evidence of diffusion from China after all; or (c) that perhaps Buddhists rejected the sexual-hygienic arm of the complex in this period, if we are indeed seeing evidence of diffusion.

With the modifications to Needham's theory that these critiques necessitate, and the new evidence for parts of it from the Buddhist record, in hand, I will finally argue that it is indeed plausible, on broader historical grounds, to suppose that alchemical ideas about immortality and aurifaction could have diffused from China into the Buddhist cultural sphere that gave rise to our texts around the fourth century. It may therefore be plausible to think that ideas about immortal embodiment we find in the same chronological stage of the Buddhist record might have been influence in some degree by the alchemical ideas.

2. The attainment of immortality by elixirs and "alchemy" in the Chinese canon

As with ideas about the immortality of Śākyamuni and the idea that he has an adamant body, it is noticeable that it is extremely difficult to find any reference to the possibility of attaining immortality by means of elixirs[3105] in the Chinese canon prior to c. 400,[3106] but that thereafter, we suddenly begin to find a number of such references.[3107]

The only possible earlier exception I know of to this pattern, that is, the only possible such reference earlier than 400 C.E., is in a text attributed to Zhi Qian, the *Ambāṣṭha-sūtra* 佛開解梵志阿颰經 T20,[3108] corresponding to DN 3 *Ambaṭṭha-sutta*, where we read that some claim that there are practitioners of a Way (a general term for "seekers") who collect herbs, twigs, leaves,

[3105] To my knowledge, the question of when such ideas first show up in the Buddhist record has not previously been studied. As we shall see below (see p. 1462 ff), Arthur Waley and, after him, Joseph Needham have studied references to what they call "alchemy" in the Chinese canon, but despite the broad definition Needham gives to the term "alchemy" for other ends, in this case the term seems to be restricted to ideas about aurifaction. As I will argue below, in order to get an adequate grip on the complex of ideas treated by Needham under the catch-all head of "alchemy", however, it is necessary to distinguish carefully between components of that complex, and thus, in this section, I have as a first step deliberately focused specifically on the idea that it is possible to attain immortality by elixirs, and nothing else.

[3106] See p. 1034 for caveats, which observations apply here also.

[3107] For this and following sections of the discussion, I will relegate discussion of dating to the footnotes. It should be noted that the references we do find clustered around 400 CE are nowhere near as numerous as those that appear from the Tang onwards, but I have of course not treated the later references here, since they are irrelevant to the point under discussion; see e.g. T1886.708b09-12; T1955.1002c29-1003a01. It is noticeable, for instance, that the term *chengxian* 成仙 cannot be found in any texts that I have seen earlier than the Sui (for which see e.g. Jñānagupta's T190.903b26-28, 919b27-c02). It is also noticeable that references to this trope are quite common in the Tang Tantrists, including Śubhākarasiṃha (637-735), e.g. 七佛俱胝佛母心大准提陀羅尼法 T1078.187.a07-11; 七俱胝獨部法 T1079.188a02-08; 慈氏菩薩略修瑜伽念誦法 T1141.599b03-06, 599c07-21 etc; Vajrabodhi, 能令諸母天/受與妙仙藥/服壽命一劫/若以檀香護, T867.268a09-10; see especially a remarkable reference in Prajñā (744-c810) in which a meditator, as part of a ritual, is supposed to express the wish that " upon arising from *samādhi*", they will "receive the ambrosia elixir that expunges fever, defilement and sickness and brings about the realisation of the eternity, bliss, [great] *ātman* and purity of the *dharmakāya*": 唯願仁者。一心合掌瞻仰尊顏。從定而起授甘露藥。除熱惱病令證法身常樂我淨; T159.294c01-02.

[3108] I owe the identification of the Sanskrit title of this *sūtra* to Jungnok Park (personal communication); no Sanskrit title is given e.g. in *Hôbôgirin* "Répertoire".

flowers and fruits, and eat them as a medicinal potion that makes the eater immortal (*xian* 仙).[3109] Given that this is the sole exception to the otherwise universal pattern we are examining here, it warrants examining in some detail. The context for this assertion is that the Buddha is describing for his interlocutor, Ambāṣṭha, various misguided forms of religious practice, and asking whether they are what his master teaches. The passage in T20 reads in full as follows:[3110]

> "The Buddha said, 'I see that there are also seekers[3111] in the world who, not knowing the Buddhadharma, live in seclusion in marshes and swamps (藪澤), eating [only] gourds and berries (果蓏), and say they need no teacher, but rather, that they will just attain a state of nature. Is this accomplishing the Way?'
>
> "[Ambāṣṭha] answered, 'It is not.'
>
> "The Buddha said, 'The Way is attained through the mind; one must have a teacher. This is the first path (*dao*) of misguided belief. <u>Again, there are other seekers who gather various herbs, twigs, leaves, flowers and fruits, and ingest them in potions, believing that they can thus become immortal (仙)</u>. Do your master and his disciples believe in such [practices]?'
>
> "[Ambāṣṭha] replied, 'No, we do not.'

3109 On the term *xian,* see Bokenkamp 22-23. Bokenkamp emphasises that in Chinese Daoist contexts, the term has a broader range of meaning, referring to "those who have ascended to rungs of the ladder higher than those occupied by humans" on a "chain of being extending from nonsentient forms of life that also experience growth and decay to the highest reaches of the empyrean". I am grateful to Jan Nattier for pointing out this reference to me. Prof. Nattier also points out that in a range of Buddhist texts *xian* most usually translates *ṛṣi,* with no necessary connotations of immortality (personal communication). For my current purposes, however, I have (admittedly somewhat anachronistically) taken my lead from the apparent interchangeability of 仙藥 and 不死藥 in the texts I have surveyed (see p. 1458, texts cited in n. 3107, 3125, 3134 for *xianyao,* 3128,3130 for *busiyao*), and taken the transformation involved in making a human *xian* to refer generically to the attainment of some extraordinary longevity or full immortality. Without making this assumption, it seems that it would be impossible to trace the possible links between discourse about magical or pharmacopoeiac attainment of unusual lifespan and discourse about extraordinary lifespan of Buddhas, and I fear that a genuine connection might thus be obscured by insisting too rigidly on distinctions in terminology. We should note, however, that this means that quite apart from the possibility that this passage is "Chinese colour" added in the process of translation, as argued below, the semantics of the term *xian* are another reason to suspect we may not yet be dealing with full-fledged immortality here, let alone such an idea in the Indian cultural sphere.

3110 This translation is provisional, and given only for the convenience of readers who cannot read Chinese; I have not pursued points of philological or lexical detail.

3111 Lit. "adherents of a Way", *daoshi* 道士, for "ascetics or brahmans"; Jan Nattier informs me in a private communication that Zhi Qian often uses this term as a translation for *śramaṇa*.

"[The Buddha said,] 'This is the second path (*dao*) of misguided belief. Again, there are seekers who abandon their parents, and wear garments made of deerskins; they lie on couches of straw, their hair dishevelled, and do not eat, seeking the Way through supplication to Heaven (拜天求道). They torment themselves in vain, and gain nothing thereby. Do you model yourself after them?'

"[Ambāṣṭha] replied, 'We do not.'

"[The Buddha said,] 'This is the third path (*dao*) of misguided belief. There are other seekers who secrete themselves off in some secluded spot, proclaiming themselves in possession of the Way (?題門有道[3112]). They make ritual offerings to water, fire, the sun, the moon, and the five planets, and make cooked and blood sacrifices to Heaven, prostrating themselves (博頰[3113]) and begging for prosperity. Do you conduct yourselves in this way?'

"[Ambāṣṭha] replied, 'We do not.'

"[The Buddha said,] 'This is the fourth path of misguided belief.'"[3114]

The most likely explanation for the presence of these ideas in this early text,[3115] I believe, is that they are Chinese ideas that were interpolated by the translators of the text during the

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[3112] This translation is speculative, reading *ti men* in the sense of "inscribing their lintel with", almost like "hanging out a shingle to say . . ."

[3113] This word is not in the *Hanyu da cidian,* but is associated with other terms for "kowtowing" at a couple of places in the canon that discuss such language, e.g. 俗非雅。如經中乞頭博頰等語是, T2061.724a11-12, 長跪頓首稽首稽顙叩頭博頰等語; T2110.543c24-25.

[3114] 佛言。我見世間。亦有道士。不知佛法。隱居藪澤。食於果蓏。言不用師。當得自然。此得道乎。對曰不得。佛言。道從心得。當有師法。是爲癡妄信道一也。復有道士。採取百草枝葉華實。服食方藥。自用可仙。汝師弟子。亦信此乎。對曰不信。是爲癡妄信道二也。或有道士。委棄父母。著鹿皮衣。臥止草蓐。被髮不食。拜天求道。徒自困苦。無所成獲。汝効此乎。對曰不效。是爲癡妄信道三也。亦有道士。深居閑處。題門有道。祭事水火日月五星。烹殺祠天。博頰求福。汝爲此乎。對曰不爲。是謂爲癡妄信道四也. T20.262a10-263a24. My emphases.

[3115] The attribution of this text to Zhi Qian is not entirely secure: the text is not so attributed in Sengyou's *Chu sanzang ji ji* (see Zürcher I, 50 and II, 336 n. 137), though it appears there in the section of "anonymous scriptures" taken from Dao'an's catalogue (T2145.26b29; I owe this reference to Jan Nattier), showing that it was in circulation in the late fourth century. It first appears with the attribution to Zhi Qian in Fei Changfang's *Lidai san bao ji* (as confirmed by Park, personal communication). However, Jan Nattier believes there are reasons to tentatively regard it as possibly genuine: " The style is very much like Zhi Qian; not only wording, but the tendency to use indigenous Chinese religious terminology to gloss Buddhist concepts" (personal communication, December 2006). Regardless of whether the text is by Zhi Qian or not, however, the evidence of Sengyou's anonymous attribution, and the fact that Jungnok Park identifies convincing reasons to think that the style is incompatible with a later period of Chinese Buddhist history, mean that we may bracket the question of Zhi Qian's authorship, and consider the early date as quite firm.

translation process. Indeed, Jungnok Park notes that such interpolations are typical of the translation style of Zhi Qian and his collaborators,[3116] and so such an interpolation would be no cause for wonder. The translation would thus be aiming to transmit the spirit of the original text but not exactly the letter, substituting for various Indian ascetic practices the details of eremitic lifestyles closer to home for the intended readers of the text. My contention that this idea is probably a translators interpolation is supported by the fact that other versions of the text also do not contain it. In the Pāli version of the same text, we do indeed find a list of four "paths of failure" (*apāyamukhaṃ*[3117]), but the precise contents of them are quite different: they are a gradated series of asceticisms practices by "ascetics of Brahmins", from the most ascetic, who "plunge into the forest" and live only on "windfalls", through those who use a "spade or basket" to gather "tubers and roots", to those who "sit tending the flame" of a small cooking fire "at the edge of a village or small town", to those who erect a house at a crossroads and pledge to honour passing ascetics and Brahmins.[3118] The contents of these mistaken practices differ not only in the Pāli version of the text, but also in the version found in the *Dīrghâgama* of Buddhayaśas and Zhu Fonian, where they match the Pāli much more closely;[3119] and I cannot find anything at all corresponding to this section of the text at all in the section of the **Mūla-sarvāstivāda-vinaya-kṣudraka-vastu* corresponding to the *Ambaṭṭha*.[3120]

[3116] Personal communication, December 2006.

[3117] Cf. Chinese 癡妄信道.

[3118] Walshe 119-120.

[3119] To give only the example that most closely concerns us here, of the second practice, the text reads: 手執澡瓶。持杖箕術。入山林中。食自落果; T1.86c26-27.

[3120] T1451.378b-380b. I am grateful to Jungnok Park for pointing out this parallel to me (personal communication). Park also notes the existence of a Sanskrit version of the text in the unpublished Sanskrit *Dīrghâgama*; I have not been able to compare this version of the text for the purposes of this study.

I conclude that despite the initial appearance given by the appearance of the idea of seeking immortality by elixirs in this translation text attributed to Zhi Qian that such ideas could have been current in the Indic Buddhist cultural sphere as early as the third century, the presence of those ideas in the text is most likely an artefact of Zhi Qian's usual translation practice of making reference to Chinese cultural practices and ideas. It thus seems likely that the text is evidence rather that the ideas were current in a the *Chinese* cultural sphere that formed the context for that translation, i.e. the South China of the third century; and we know this fact already from the testimony of the non-Buddhist Chinese record, and particularly the famous work of Ge Hong.[3121]

Turning now to the period attested by translations in the decades around 400 C.E., there is no dearth of references to the attainment of immortality by elixirs.

Thus, the **Mahāprajñāpāramitā-śāstra* mentions such techniques in a list of various magical practices that are interdicted.[3122] In another passage, the same text describes a magical display where a group of monks are transformed into greybeards and back again, and a verse compares their second transformation to that of someone who has "taken an elixir that reverses ageing";[3123] the same preparation is mentioned a second time elsewhere in the text.[3124] In the 佛垂般涅槃略說教誡經 (T389), also attributed to Kumārajīva, "magical incantations and (/for?)

[3121] For whom see below, p. 1470.

[3122] 所謂不作祝(var. 呪)術合藥。祝術者能翳身令人不見。能變人爲畜獸。如是等種種祝術。<u>合藥者餌食求仙</u>。亦合和諸藥療疾求財。及求名聲。祝鬼者有人欲知未來事。祝鬼令著男女; T1509.577a10-14.

[3123] 如是耆老相/還變成少身/如服還年藥/是事何由然; T1509.224b25-26; Lamotte, *Traité* 1395-1396.

[3124] 又服還年藥雖老而壯, T1509.622b21-22. This portion of the text is not included in Lamotte's translation.

elixirs of immortality" (呪術仙藥)are similarly included in a list of forbidden practices.[3125] In Huiyan and Xie Lingyun's version of the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra,* the teachings of the Tathāgata are compared to ambrosia (*amṛta,* 甘露藥) as a drug of immortality that cures the sickness of birth-and-death.[3126] The anonymous 師子月佛本生經 (T176) has the Buddha tell a king that the precepts are like ambrosia (once again, 甘露藥), which prevents the one who drinks it from ageing or dying.[3127] Baoyun's 寶雲 佛本行經 (T193) contrasts the mistaken pursuit of an elixir of immortality (不死藥) in the palace of the Serpent King (*nāgarāja*), which are explicitly said to be inefficacious (服者不永壽/不離老病死) with the genuine article, which is of course provided by the Buddha.[3128] Both Dharmakṣema's and Huiyan et al's versions of the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra* expressly compares the Buddha's teachings to an "ambrosiac elixir" that confers true healing on the sufferer, since in virtue of the cure it bestows, one escapes both death and birth for ever.[3129] In Faxian's version of the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra* only, the stupid

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[3125] T389.1110c26-29.

[3126] 如來所治者/畢竟不復發/世尊甘露藥/以施諸眾生/眾生既服已/不死亦不生 etc.; T375.709a12-19. For the date of this version, see above p. 1091. Compare the version of the "First Sermon" narrative, translated almost around the same time if the attribution to Gautama Saṃghadeva is correct (on Saṃghadeva's dates, see n. 373), in which the Tathāgata is made to say to Brahmā Sanaṃkumāra, rather than that he will "beat the drum of the deathless (*amatadundubhinti*)" (see n. 348 above for the relevant MN verses), that he will "enlighten the blind *with the ambrosiac elixir* (=*amṛta*)", 今當轉法輪/往詣加尸邦(Kāsī)/今以甘露藥/開彼盲冥者, T125.618c10-11. Though this verse does not, of course, actually claim of this elixir that it bestows longevity, and therefore falls outside the pattern of evidence we are examining here, it is perhaps significant that such a modification to the translation of **amṛta-* could creep into the record at almost the same time as this rash of other references to elixirs.

[3127] T176.445c18-24. *Hôbôgirin* assigns this text vaguely to the period 350-431.

[3128] T193.56c24-57a10. References to 甘露藥 are especially frequent in this text, if not necessarily in contexts where it is said to confer immortality. Baoyun was a pilgrim to India, born in 376, who did his translation work under the Liu Song after 424; *Hôbôgirin* 257, DDB s.v. 佛本行經.

[3129] E.g. in Dharmakṣema: 大慈愍眾生/故令我歸依/善拔眾毒箭/故稱大醫王/世醫所療治/雖差還復生/如來所治者/畢竟不復發/世尊甘露藥/以施諸眾生/眾生既服已/不死亦不生/如來今爲我/演說大涅槃/眾生聞祕藏/即得不生滅, T374.466b17-24; see T375.709a12-19 for the same passage in the Huiyan version. On Dharmakṣema's dates, see n. 2429; on the dates of the Huiyan version, see above p. 1091.

doctor in Chapter 3 who cures everything with milk is made to say to the clever doctor, "I will teach you the medicinal arts of immortality (當教汝不死藥法)," and, a little later, "Let me tell you, this milk cures all sicknesses – its a drug of immortality! (當知此乳救一切病爲不死藥)."[3130] Buddhabhadra's version of the *Avataṃsaka-sūtra* refers at least twice to an elixirs (阿羅娑藥, 甘露)that have the power to confer invulnerability or immortality.[3131] Guṇavṛddhi's 百喻經 (T209) overtly denies the possibility that such elixirs could be found.[3132] It is also possibly part of the same general set of ideas that Buddhabhadra's *Buddhânusmṛtisamādhisāgara-sūtra* (T643) mentions a tree whose fruit can make a Brahman live for a *kalpa*.[3133]

Despite the fact that it is only attested in the late translation by Xuanzang, I must also mention in this connection a passage in the *Mahāyānasaṃgrahôpanibandhana* by Asvabhāva, where the Yogācāra concept of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* ("transformation of the basis") is explained by the analogy of the transformation of the "corporeal support" occasioned by taking "elixirs of immortality"

[3130] T376.862c01-02, 862c21. In other versions of the text, the stupid doctor only speaks generically of "medicinal arts" etc: see T374.378a28; T375.618a01-03;

[3131] 譬如有人服食甘露。一切眾患所不能害。菩薩摩訶薩。亦復如是。服菩提心甘露法藥。不墮聲聞緣覺之地。修習大悲滿足願行; T278.779a19-23; corresponding to Cleary 361, apparently translating from a different version of the text: "Just as one who has drunk the elixir of immortality (甘露) does not die from the attacks of others, in the same way the enlightened being who has drunk the immortality elixir of the aspiration for omniscience does not die in the stages of learners of individual salvation and does not cease acting on the vow of universal compassion of enlightened beings." 譬如有人服阿羅娑藥。不瘦不老延壽無窮。菩薩摩訶薩。亦復如是。服菩提心阿羅娑藥。於無量劫在生死中。修菩薩行無所染著。譬如阿羅娑藥初用淨水。菩提心藥亦復如是。一切菩薩所修行中。最爲先首; T278.779b06-11, corresponding roughly to Cleary 362: "Just as a person who takes the elixir of life lives for a long time and does not grow weak, the enlightened being who uses the elixir of the aspiration for omniscience goes around in the mundane whirl for countless aeons without becoming exhausted and without being stained by the ills of the mundane whirl." I will return to the first of these passages, which incidentally provides us with clue possibly quite significant, below p. 1465.

[3132] T209.549a11-26; Guṇavṛddhi worked in Nanjing from 492-495, *Hôbôgirin* 252.

[3133] T643.646b19-29. On Buddhabhadra's (early fifth-century) dates, see n. 2275.

(即轉所依者如服仙藥轉所依身).[3134] Though this passage, in light of its later authorship by Asvabhāva, does not present any strong additional evidence for the claim I am making here that these notions appear in Buddhist materials around 400, it is interesting that this analogy is found in a text commenting on the work of Asaṇga, who was of course active around this very time. This passage also suggests a link between the doctrine of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* and these doctrines of alchemical transformation. (We already touched on the latter dimensions of the passage above, in Chapter 5.2, which was dedicated to discussion of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* proper.)

Reviewing these references, then, with the single possible exception of the Zhi Qian passage, I know of no indication of such ideas in the Chinese record prior to c. 400. If the Zhi Qian passage is most likely an artefact of the translation process in China, and not a component of the Indic text, therefore, it seems clear from the sudden onset of these ideas in texts of Indian composition around 400 that they had attained a new and widespread currency in the cultural sphere where the texts were produced.[3135]

I suggest, then, given the coincidence of the first evidence of ideas about immortality by elixirs and ideas of immortality implying, or in virtue of, radical bodily transformation, that the two developments may be linked. It is possible that a reaction to these alchemical ideas of pharmaceutical immortality was one factor at work in the turn of Buddhist discourses towards the idea that Śākyamuni's newfound, docetically enabled actual immortality had a very solid

[3134] T1598.395a02-12.

[3135] This pattern is all the more striking when we consider some of the things that are *not* found in the Chinese canon. For instance, the term 金丹, "golden cinnabar", which appears as early as Ge Hong as a term for the elixir of immortality (see Li and Fan 87, for example), is not found in any Buddhist text to my knowledge before the Tang.

(adamant!) corporeal dimension – and the corresponding cooption of the older Buddhist trope of a body *like* adamant, which we saw had various other senses in earlier periods, to this end.

We can also see, from the examples attested above, that the general attitude evinced towards such ideas by the texts is one of opposition and contestation. Many of the passages cited above are critical of the idea that elixirs might exist that confer immortality, or forbid dabbling in such arts, or (as in Faxian's version of the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra* parable of the stupid doctor) even use the idea as a hallmark of idiocy to satirise polemical targets. Other passages, moreover, seek to redirect attention from these bogus ideas and practices to the genuine Buddhist article, as if to say, "If it's ambrosia/elixirs bestowing exemption from death you want, then what you really want is the Buddha's teachings/the precepts etc." In other words, these texts show that the world of Buddhist ideas to which they testify was aware of such ideas, but not that it accepted them. We need to keep this critical attitude held by the texts towards such ideas in mind when we seek to interpret the possible relation between such ideas and the doctrines of embodiment that also became current around the same time.

Given the contestational tone we see quite uniformly in the Buddhist references above, we must not be led into mistakenly thinking that these new immortal ideal embodiments of the Buddha were somehow imagined to be achieved through alchemical-pharmaceutical means. Rather, it seems more likely that Buddhist discourse wanted to *replace* the whole alchemical-pharmaceutical mechanism with a process driven by the Buddha's immense merit (and, possibly, if there was continuity in this regard with earlier Pāli-canonical and Abhidharma doctrines about mastery over lifespan, his meditational powers). Further, it seems clear that this contestation of authority over or means of access to various recognised goods current in discourses of human perfection broader than Buddhism *per se* is part of a very old pattern

observable in Buddhism. In this case, for example, we might recognise a continuity between this Buddhist claim that the real means of access to undying is actually through properly Buddhist means like merit, rather than elixirs etc., and the old Buddhist reworking of the Upaniṣadic notion of *amṛta* we studied above in the case of the Pāli canon, where it was consistently claimed that the real path to *amata* lay not through ritual propriety, the kinds of secret gnosis propounded by the *Upaniṣads,* etc., but through properly Buddhist practice and knowledge like the eightfold noble path, insight into the true nature of the *skandhas,* and so on.

I have already taken the liberty of referring to ideas of immortality by elixir as "alchemical", and the association of this idea with the broader complex of ideas and practices we usually loosely label "alchemy" is surely obvious. If the new ideas about immortal embodiments of the Buddha evidenced in the Chinese record around 400 are indeed some form of response to ideas about the pharmacopoeiac pursuit of immortality newly impinging on the *milieu* of those texts in that same period, the possibility therefore arises that we are confronted here with an impact upon the Buddhist tradition of some form of alchemical thought and practice. This possibility certainly has potential ramifications for the history of religious and cultural exchange, and is worth looking into briefly for its own sake; depending upon how far the web of associated (purportedly) "alchemical" ideas reaches, however, it may also have further implications for the history of Buddhist doctrines of embodiment. For these reasons, we will now consider another set of ideas that also crops up in the Chinese record for the first time in this same period – ideas about magical or alchemical aurifaction.

3. First evidence of ideas about aurifaction in the Chinese canon

Like ideas about the corporeally transformational immortality of Śākyamuni Buddha and the achievement of immortality by elixirs, ideas about magical or alchemical aurifaction, too, seem

noticeably absent in the Chinese record prior to 400 C.E.,[3136] and thereafter suddenly begin to appear in several texts (usually in the margins of talk about other topics).[3137]

These references are most numerous in the **Mahāprajñāpāramitā-śāstra.* As part of a description of the magical powers of the *bodhisattva-mahāsattva,* MPPŚ discusses *nirmāṇarddhi,* the power to transform things, and in a list of example transformations the *bodhisattva* has the power to effect is included the power to "transform gravel into gold or vice versa (令金作瓦礫瓦礫作金)".[3138] A similar power is associated with the notion of *nirmāṇa* when the text describes fourteen kinds of "transformational states of mind" (*nirmāṇacitta*) that are attained through the

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[3136] Once more, for caveats about the methodology pursued here, see p. 1034.

[3137] In 1932, Arthur Waley published a small note ("References to Alchemy"), listing references to "alchemy" in the Chinese Buddhist canon. Following him, Joseph Needham repeated the same passages, errors and all, in 1976, with the introduction of a little more information and a few new errors; Needham V:3, 160-161, 164-165. I have benefited in my research from the knowledge of the passages Waley points out, which I first learnt of through Needham, but it has also been necessary to cross-check their work to eliminate the errors of omission Waley understandably fell into without the luxury of the tools we now dispose of, and the additional errors Needham introduces; it has also proven important in many cases to examine the context of the passages Waley noted, which put some of his examples in quite a different light; in particular, Waley presents the passages entirely deracinated from their Buddhist doctrinal context (e.g. their relation to the notion of the *bodhisattva*), and Needham, naturally, does not improve upon him in this regard. The evidence summarised in this subsection of this dissertation also incorporates a number of passages that Waley did not notice.

I will silently correct Waley and Needham's errors below, but to support my claim that they make them: Waley incorrectly states, e.g., that certain passages found in the Śikṣānanda version of the *Avataṃsaka* are not to be found in the earlier version, and Needham follows him in this assertion; see, however, T279.432b23-25, T278.778b16-20. Needham speaks of Xuanzang "incorporating" the story of Śānaka and his minister into his translation of the **Mahāvibhāṣā*, and it being "probably recent" at the time, but this is entirely unjustified, since the story also appears in the older version of the text at T1546.310c03-06; it seems that Needham has simply rashly leapt from Waley's comment that the later version "may contain much matter which was comparatively recent when Hsüan-tsang produced his version", 1103, to the conclusion that this is true of this passage in particular. Needham mistranslates in minor details when he introduces additional material to expand on Waley's very abbreviated account of the material, as when he translates the *Avataṃsaka's* 善男子。如有藥汁名訶宅迦 . . . as "The good man is like the chymical liquid called *hataka . . .* ", failing to recognise the stock-in-trade Buddhist vocative "Son of good family!"; etc.

[3138] T1509264b; Lamotte 1820. Lamotte gives *kaṭhalla* for *wali*. In answer to a question posed by an opponent in the sequence, these transformations are explained as pseudo-natural phenomena. "Under pressure, stone becomes gold; gold, when refined (汁, "pressurised" according to Lamotte); when it decays, gold becomes bronze or returns to stone (石汁作金金敗爲銅或還爲石). So to it is with sentient beings: the bad can become good, and the good can become bad . . ."; T1509.264c08-25, Lamotte 1821.

four *dhyānas*: these fourteen states of mind accomplish eight different kinds of *nirmāṇa* or magical transformation, among which is the power to "obtain all as one wishes". This eighth kind of *nirmāṇa* here is in fact an entire set, which includes some of the very old powers that date back to the list accruing to the practitioner in DN 2 that we examined in the course of discussing the "snake slough" model of *manomayakāya* in Chapter 2:[3139] the power to make oneself one or many, the power to walk through walls or on water, the power to fly, and to touch the moon and the sun with one's hand; as we have also seen above, this list came eventually to sometimes include power of control over one's own life forces and lifespan.[3140] Tacked onto the end of this list, however (in place of "travelling with one's body as far as the Brahmā world in the *Dīghanikāya* version of this list) is the power to transform the four great elements (*caturmahābhūtāni pariṇāmayati*), including (along with the power to ring the changes on water, earth, fire, and air) "to change earth into gold and gold into earth".[3141]

In a passage that anticipates some arguments in contemporary Buddhist social ethics and economics, the same text describes the way a *bodhisattva* realises that the material poverty and suffering of sentient beings prevents them from listening to or accepting his teachings, and therefore seeks out to enrich them by all means possible; among the methods he resorts to, the text tells us, he transforms bronze to gold by means of "medicinal herbs and incantations" (藥草呪術).[3142] In the same text, the way a "skilled artisan" can transform silver into gold (or vice

[3139] See p. 256 ff.

[3140] As e.g. in the *nikāya* references to this power accruing to the master of the *iddhipāda*; see above p. 1039.

[3141] T1509.105a11-22; Lamotte 382.

[3142] T1509.178a27-28; Lamotte, *Traité* 971. This passage is noted in Waley. (Where a passage is noted in both Waley and Needham after him, I will below merely mention Waley alone, since Needham adds no new material. Since Waley's note is only two pages long, I will also refrain from listing page numbers.) The *bodhisattva* is also described immediately before this as "climbing mountains and going into peril 登山履危 in search of wondrous drugs, and delving deep into stony mines in search of various rare

versa!) "by the power of drugs" (以藥力故) is used as an analogy for the way the *bodhisattva* can use his skill in means to convert beings of various spiritual dispositions.[3143] In another passage, the text compares those with keen spiritual faculties (*tīkṣṇêndriya*), presumably for the relative ease with which they accede to the *dharmadhātu* that is *nirvāṇa* (the topic of the text here), to those who can transform bricks into gold (能變瓦石皆使爲金) by their magical powers (*ṛddhyabhijñā,* 神通); by contrast, those of dull faculties are like master smiths who obtain their gold by the usual laborious pounding of stones.[3144]

Waley already discovered a passage in the **Mahāvibhāṣā* that relates a tradition that a King Śāṇaka and his minister "Moon-Lover" (Huaiyue 懷月) discovered the technique for making gold after a search of twelve years.[3145] This tradition is already found in the older translation of this text by Buddhavarman, Daotai 道泰 et al., who worked in the first half of the fifth century.[3146]

Buddhabhadra's *Avataṃsaka-sūtra* contains a passage comparing the power of the aspiration for *bodhi* (*bodhicitta*) to overcome all obstacles and purify all *dharmas* to the power of an elixir, one *liang* of which can turn a thousand ounces of bronze into gold, while the bronze has no power

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substances, mineral essences (? 石汁, seemingly precious metals; see also the passage cited above n. 3138) and precious gems", a24-25. The idea elaborated here that the *bodhisattva* would use material riches to increase the allure of his teachings for sentient beings is reflected in some of the MSgBh passages neglected by Waley cited above, e.g. T1596.314a16-17.

3143 T1509.195c06-09; Lamotte 1104. Noted in Waley.

3144 T1509.298b17-26; Lamotte 2196-2197. Noted in Waley.

3145 T1546.310c03-06; T1545.414c22-415a01.

3146 *Hôbôgirin* 248, 244; the translation was probably made around 437-439.

to affect the elixir in any way whatsoever.[3147] In Buddhabhadra version of the text, this elixir is called 阿羅娑藥, exactly the same name, that is, as that of a drug that appears elsewhere in that same text with the power of conferring immortality on one who drinks it, as we saw above.[3148] For various reasons, it is difficult to know what Sanskrit the Chinese name of this elixir might reflect,[3149] but 羅娑 obviously makes us think of **rasa,* which is one of the most common names for mercury/quicksilver.[3150] Even if this passage is not referring to *rasa* = quicksilver, however, this passage, in combination with the passage examined above that refers to the *same* elixir as leading to immortality, is very significant, in that it shows that, in this one case at least, the world of these Buddhist texts already know a genuine link between the pharmacopoeiac quest for immortality and magical aurifaction, rather than that link merely being something we anachronistically project back upon the texts from our knowledge of later

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[3147] 譬如一兩阿羅娑藥。變千兩銅以爲真金。於彼藥分無所損減。菩提心藥亦復如是。攝迴向智。除滅一切煩惱業障。淨一切法。同薩婆若色。煩惱惡業不能損減; T 278.778b16-20. This passage was noted by Waley in Śikṣānanda's translation only, T1545.414c22-415a01, where the elixir is called 訶宅迦 (**hāṭaka*?); see Clearly, *Entry* 359, on the "ointment called 'golden light'". Waley is obviously wrong, however, when he states that this passage does not occur in the earlier Ch. *Avataṃsaka*. The identification of the elixir concerned as *hāṭaka* is from Waley; Monier Williams cites the word in this use from the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa*.

[3148] See above p. 1459.

[3149] The term 阿羅娑藥 does not appear anywhere in the canon but in these passages and the commentarial literature. The term 阿羅娑 alone is also found in the **Mahāsaṃnipātasūtra* 大方等大集經, as part of the name of the sixth of six sage-dragons, 殊致阿羅娑, to which the text has a gloss stating "In the language of the Sui, [this means] 'Savour of Light'" 隋言光味, T397.273c01; Soothill gives this name as Jyotīrasa. Elsewhere in the text this same person is referred to as an "immortal" (仙人, "transcendent" in Bokenkamp's usage), T397.276a06. None of this leaves me any the wiser what to do with the first character 阿. Fazang says that *hāṭaka* means "golden light" and *aluosha* means "medicinal extract" (?汁藥; for *zhi,* see once more n. 3138, 3142 above): 阿羅娑藥者具云呵吒迦阿羅娑。此云金光汁藥。呵吒迦云金光明。阿羅娑云汁藥, T1733.488c03-05 (note the orthographic variation).

[3150] 應疑羅娑 is for Aṅgīrasa at T26.680c07; 沸伽羅娑羅婆/沸伽羅沙羅 for Pokkharasādi at various places in *Dīrghâgama,* e.g. T1.82a09-10; 娑羅娑 transcribes *sārasa,* "the Indian crane", Soothill 323b; etc. Simple 羅娑藥 appears nowhere, however.

alchemy. We should note, further, that the *Avataṃsaka* also makes further mention in passing of the possibility of alchemical aurifaction.[3151]

Waley and Needham are wrong to suggest that a passage from the *Mahāyānasaṃgraha* has any but the most remote echoes of alchemy.[3152]

It has to be acknowledged that on this evidence, knowledge of or interest in the trope of magical or alchemical aurifaction is not as widespread as the other themes we are discussing here. It is particularly notable that I have only been able to find this sort of talk in a small number of texts: the **Mahāprajñāpāramitā-śāstra,* the *Avataṃsaka,* and the **Mahāvibhāṣā.* It is also notable that during the above discussion, no evidence was found in the **Mahāvibhāṣā* of our other themes of immortality, either of Śākyamuni Buddha or by means of elixirs, or special embodiments.

Nonetheless, even with these provisos, it is still significant, I would argue, that such a number of passing mentions of this idea are suddenly to be found in the very same stratum of the texts where we find the flowering of the other themes we discuss in this Appendix and in Chapter 5.1.

[3151] These passages, in both Buddhabhadra and Śikṣānanda are at T278.776b28-29, T279.187a19-20, T279.430b28-29. Prajñā's version also contains passages corresponding to some of those discussed here at T293.826a12-13, T293.828b07-09.

[3152] Both scholars fail to notice that in MSgBh V.2, where they cite a passage that says *bodhisattvas* "can turn earth into gold or other precious substances just as they please" (Needham 164; see Waley 1102, where the *Taishō* vol. no. is mistakenly given as xxi for xxxi), the text is talking about a power that accrues to *bodhisattvas* at the eighth stage of the path, the *kṣetravaśitā,* which is the power to elaborate buddha-fields (*buddhakṣetra*) at will; T1597.358b01-28, see Lamotte II, 198-199, and especially trans. from Xuanzang's Bh in fn. The background and significance of this doctrine is of course complex and various, but given that it refers to cosmically remote worlds, whose characteristics date back to at least the time of the early Sukhāvatī literature, it is hardly supportable to claim that there is an alchemical connection here. Similar claims of such powers for advanced *bodhisattvas* are found in a number of passages missed by Waley, e.g. MSg itself, T1595.238c05-08; Bh T1596.307a10-12, 310b26-27; 314a16-17; T1597.371c23-372a21.; so, too, *Mahāyānasaṃgrahôpanibandhana* of Asvabhāva, T1598.437c18-25; etc.

Moreover, as we just noted, in Buddhabhadra's *Avataṃsaka* the very same elixir is said to be efficacious in aurifaction and also to bestow immortality, showing that the connection between aurifaction and the pharmacopoeiac pursuit of immortality is real in this period,[3153] and not merely a characteristic of later phases in alchemical history. We can further note that the same kinds of language are used in talking about the pharmacopoeiac or magical techniques for immortality and aurifaction: use is made for both ends of "medicinal herbs" 藥草 and "the art of spells" 呪術; in both cases one uses "drugs" 藥; it is also notable that both the power to transform other substances into gold and the power to attain infinite life at will are sometimes incorporated into the same place in the Buddhist scheme of powers, namely at the tail end of the *ṛddhipāda* schema.

In all, then, I think there are ground for cautiously entertaining the possibility that roughly simultaneous entry of ideas of pharmacopoeiac immortality and aurifaction into the Chinese record is evidence that they arrived in the world of Buddhist ideas to which those texts bear witness as a ready-made combined package. This would mean that even the smattering of references to aurifaction we have found clustered in the early fifth century is further evidence for the hypothesis that alchemical ideas first impinged upon that intellectual world around this time, and that the turn to more corporeally immortal modes of imagining Buddhist forms of ideal embodiment may be a response to this new challenge.

Now, it is notable that with this association, we have begun to broaden our purview from ideas about immortality as such to a larger complex of ideas usually grouped under the rubric of "alchemy". Throughout his landmark and influential work on the history of science in China,

[3153] Though, as elsewhere in this dissertation, I am loath to make any strong claims on the strength of a single passage.

for example, Joseph Needham associates pharmacopoeiac pursuit of immortality and aurifaction with other practices and ideas in a broader alchemical complex. In order to fully assess the likelihood that we see in the Buddhist ideas we have been examining the impact of something called alchemy, then, we will profit from engaging with Needham's characterisation of what he calls "alchemy" as a whole, and assessing some of his arguments about its rise and spread. As we shall see, not only does Needham's scholarship offer parts of a larger historical framework within which we can assess the developments we have examined above, but those developments themselves also constitute some new evidence for the history Needham studied, and may require that some of Needham's approach and argument be modified. In order to assess our Buddhist facts in light of Needham's work, therefore, it makes the most sense to first expose Needham's work to criticism in light of the Buddhist facts, so that we can be sure, when we return to the interpretation of the Buddhist history, that we are borrowing only those parts of Needham's narrative that stand up to scrutiny.

4. Implications of the Buddhist materials for Needham's diffusionist theory of alchemical history, and vice versa

In addition to the quest for immortality by the ingestion of various substances and the project of magical or alchemical aurifaction, Needham also sees the attempt to gain immortality by sexual means as an intrinsic part of the alchemical complex he studies. Yet there is almost no evidence that I can find in the Chinese Buddhist materials to indicate that sexual practices were impinging upon Buddhist awareness at the same time as the ideas about elixirs of immortality and aurifaction studied above.

It is certainly true, as Needham understands the situation, that in the Chinese record, at least, connections between sexual hygiene and immortality at least were well-established long before

the epoch at issue here (before 400 C.E.).[3154] Controlled intercourse without ejaculation was supposed to lead to life as long as that of the cosmos as early as the former Han, as witnessed by Mawangdui 馬王堆 texts on the subject: "By sucking her '*ching* spirit' upward, one can live forever (乃能久視)[3155] and be coeval with heaven and earth (與天地牟存)."[3156] Wang Chong 王充 (27-97) mentions similar methods,[3157] and Li and Fan include in their anthology other texts spanning the period to the period of division.[3158] Liu Dalin notes further that Cao Cao 曹操 (155-220) and Cao Zhi 曹植 (192-232) record court interest in these practices under the early Wei.[3159] Ge Hong's 葛洪 (283-363) *Baopuzi* 包朴子, moreover, provides incontrovertible proof that such sexual practices aiming at immortality were important in early Chinese "Daoism". Ge lists these sexual techniques as one of a trinity of desiderata for the pursuit of immortality, along with correct circulation of the *qi* and consumption of "the great medicine" (i.e. the elixir).[3160] Ge's work also already includes the formula *huan jing bu nao* 還精補腦, "to redirect the semen inward to supplement the brain".[3161]

[3154] Needham discusses many of the following sources, V:5, 197-201.

[3155] Li and Fan support this reading in their editorial note, 45.

[3156] "He yinyang" 合陰陽, Wile 78, Li and Fan 44. Wile cites Donald Harper saying that there seems to be a significant continuity between Mawangdui texts and Han/Six Dynasties texts, 77.

[3157] Wile 24, Li and Fan 60-62.

[3158] E.g. *Qi you* 七友 by Mu Sheng 牧乘 of the Han, 63-64; the anonymous fourth century *Huang ting jing* 黃庭經, 65-68; etc.

[3159] Liu 350-351.

[3160] Wile 24; see also Li and Fan 85; 凡服藥千種,三牲之养,而不知房中之術,亦無所益也, 86.

[3161] Li and Fan 86; second passage (釋滯) quoted Wile 24.

There can be no doubt, therefore, that some association between the attainment of immortality be elixirs and its attainment by sexual regimen was well-established, at least in China, well prior to the epoch we are examining here. However, despite the presence of the idea of attaining immortality by elixirs in the Buddhist canon by 400 C.E., I have been able to find absolutely no reference to any connection between sexual practice and the attainment of immortality anywhere in the Chinese record prior to at least the Tang dynasty; even later than this, such references are strikingly rare.[3162]

Indeed, the only place I am aware of in the Chinese record where sexual behaviour is countenanced as a means to salvation of *any* kind is a passage in the **Mahāprajñāpāramitā-śāstra,* to which we are pointed by Bernard Faure following Rolf Stein. A teacher called *Prasennêndriya (喜根) teaches an apparently proto-Tantric practice of salvation through the

[3162] Once again, it is always dangerous to say that something does not exist simply because you cannot find it, and it is entirely possible that the fault lay with my search methods, and that better searching might find counterevidence to invalidate my claim that such ideas are not to be found in the Chinese Buddhist canon of this period. For the reference of other researchers who may wish to test my claim, therefore, I will here note the methods I used. I compiled a search list of key terms drawn from the relevant sections of the *Bao pu zi* and Tao Hongjing's *Yu nü sunyi bian* 御女損益編 , two major relevant works that fall either side of the period in Buddhist history I am probing here. I also included terms found in the *Su nü jing* 素女經, Li and Fan 69-83, Wile 85-94, which is included in the Sui bibliographies; and the *Dong xuan zi* 洞玄子, 124-131, Wile 108-113, which was regarded by Maspero as dating to the seventh century and van Gulik as perhaps somewhat earlier; see Wile 83. I was working there on the assumption that even terms in texts that slightly post-date the period I am examining here might have used terminology already current in that period; and indeed, that some terms might even derive from Buddhism, as is apparently the case with e.g. *minggen* 命根 (Skt. *jivitêndriya*), used e.g. in the *Tai xi gen zhi yaojue* 胎息根旨要 訣 as a term referring to the "root and origin", *genben* 根本, a place between the navel and the nineteenth vertebra where "men store their semen, and women their menstrual blood". I thus searched for a wide range of terms, including terms connected to the practice of seminal retention reabsorption (Needham's "*coitus thesauratus*"): 還精, 反精, 返精, 還陽, 補腦 (separately from *huanjing*); general terms for "the arts of the bedchamber", "acts of the boudoir" etc.: 房中之術, 房 anywhere near 術, 房中之事, 房 anywhere near 事, 陰陽之術, 陰陽之道, 交接之術, 交接, 行陰陽, 交接之道, 交接之法, 陰陽交接; and a range of anatomical terms, including some of the usual flowery euphemisms: 命門, 命根, 玉莖, 俞鼠, 玉戶, 朱室, 丹穴, 玉門, 金洵/金沟, 璿台, 玉理, 瓊台, 神田, 幽谷; other technical terms: 陽精, 走馬, 跑馬, 陽丹, 精盡, 泄精, 施精, 動精, 愛精, 吸精, 失精, 養生, and the insalubrious 御女; names of semi-historical and legendary personages whose names are often attached to these arts, including 彭祖, 素女, 采女; any general context in which talk of the bedchamber etc. or "semen" ("life force") might be connected to longevity, such as 房中 or 精 respectively in the same context as 長生, 不老, 壽, etc.; and finally, all reasonable variants I could think of on these terms.

three poisons, and trumps a prudish teacher in the traditional mould called *Agramati (勝意). Prasennêndriya teaches that "Lust (婬欲) is none other than the path,/ Anger and ignorance are also the path;/ Within these three states [are found]/ Innumerable paths of the Buddhas (**buddhamārga*)./ Should anyone distinguish between/ Lust, anger, and ignorance and the path,/ They would be as far from the Buddha/ As Heaven is from Earth./ The path and lust, anger and ignorance/ Are but one thing, completely equivalent;/ Anyone who listens to their fears/ Is very far from the path of the Buddha."[3163] This passage is a clear and early antecedent to the ideology of what would later be called Tantra, but even so, it is a single instance, and there is further still some distance between it and the more specifically alchemical idea that sexual activity of some kind can grant or help towards immortality.

Now, if sexual practices were indeed an integral part of the alchemical complex in China, and yet we find only aurifaction and the pursuit of immortality by elixirs in the Buddhist sources, something here needs explaining. As we shall see, Needham holds further that the alchemical complex as a whole was diffused from China to from China to other parts of the Eurasian continent, including Arabia and ultimately the West, but also, most importantly for our purposes here, India. He further suggests repeatedly that this diffusion was a major component in the rise of Tantrism in India. Yet if Chinese alchemy in this period already incorporated sexual practices, and alchemy was diffused from China, why would they not have impinged on the Buddhist materials with other parts of the complex? Does the presence of only some parts of the complex before others in Buddhist materials perhaps in fact indicate a polygenesis of these ideas, such that the Buddhist materials are witness to developments independent of Needham's claimed diffusion from China? Did Buddhism somehow manage to absorb ideas

[3163] Faure, *Red Thread,* 4, 44; Lamotte, *Traité* 399-402: 婬欲即是道/恚癡亦如是/如此三事中/無量諸佛道/若有人分別/婬怒癡及道/是人去佛遠/譬如天與地/道及婬怒癡/是一法平等/若人聞怖畏/去佛道甚遠, T1509.107c21-26.

about aurifaction and immortality by elixirs and yet steadfastly disavow entirely the sexual dimensions of this complex, and if so, why? (Certainly, there is no reason to suspect Buddhist literature as a whole of any undue prurience in broaching sexual matters!) Or does the absence of sexual practices from the Buddhist materials of this era perhaps indicate that the connection between the various arms of Needham's alchemical complex was looser and more variable than he assumes?

In order to assess these questions, we need to have the outline of Needham's diffusionist theory before us, and I will therefore summarise it briefly. Needham's primary arguments for this thesis, vis-à-vis India, is as follows.

First, the quest for immortality, Needham argues, can be seen earlier in China than in India. Already, in the second century B.C.E., we see references to various figures making elixirs.[3164] Passages in the *Heshang gong* commentary to the *Dao de jing* show that the latter text was being interpreted in ways that foreshadow later *neidan* by the second century C.E.[3165] Conversely, following Eliade, Needham understands that there was no interest in "immortality" understood as "infinitely prolonged existence" in classical Yoga and other "main streams of Indian thought",[3166] but that "after a certain point", in Tantrism and Haṭhayoga, "the texts begin to

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[3164] Needham V:4, 320. Needham mentions very little here that actually proves that these elixirs were taken specifically with the quest for immortality. He also gives no indication of the sources he is relying upon for these traditions, or their dates, with the single exception of a later text from the *Dao zang,* fn. "d", and a mention of "the official history" (presumably the *Qian Han shu*).

[3165] Needham V:5, 135. The first actual reference to an "internal elixir", found by Waley, occurs either in a mention of a *shendan* 神丹 in the *Nanyü Si dachanshi lishi yuanwen* 南嶽思大禪師立誓願文 T1933, a Buddhist text of clear Chinese provenance dating to c. 565, at which point it already seems the notion is an accepted literary trope, 140; or in the *Zhi dao pian* 旨道篇, probably also datable to the same rough period, 141.

[3166] Needham V:5, 276. As we have seen in our consideration of the Buddhist discourse of *amata,* this picture is partly factually inaccurate. Whether or not earlier Indian texts of any kind proclaim an "infinitely prolonged existence", talk about "the destruction of old age and death" and "conquering

proclaim 'the destruction of old age and death' and to say that the techniques 'conquer death' (*mṛtyuṃ jayati*)".[3167] Similarly, on the Greek side, "the 'drug of immortality' was primarily a metaphor in the Greek context and primarily a real material thing for the Chinese."[3168] Further afield, "prolongevity . . . [also] remained a neglected theme, hardly indeed perceptible, in the West throughout antiquity and far into the Middle Ages, till suddenly in the 13th century there appears a full-fledged macrobiotic alchemy."[3169]

Similarly, interest in aurifaction (the manufacture of gold) is also attested earlier in China than elsewhere. Needham adduces an "extraordinary government-sponsored programme of aurifaction in the imperial workshops" of 61 to 56 B.C.E., along with several other developments and figures. All of this activity predates the earliest analogies in the Greek world, represented by Pseudo-Democritus, in the first century C.E.[3170] He also cites evidence of auri*fiction* (the counterfeiting of gold) in Han anti-coining edicts of 175 and 144 B.C.E., far earlier than a similar Diocletian proclamation of 292 or 296 C.E., and even than an earlier

death" on its own cannot mark any kind of sea change as late as the Tantric era. Buddhism proclaims from the very earliest the "destruction of old age and death", and speaks overtly of the conquest of death, even extending the metaphor to speak of overcoming death's "armies" etc; it is also, surely, not at all true that non-Buddhist systems do not "pursue immortality", unless we assume a very particular definition of *amṛta* in the Upaniṣads, for instance, that means we cannot translate it so into English. Needham speaks again a few pages later of the "very striking transition from *jīvan-mukti,* spiritual liberation or 'eternal life in the midst of time', and (*sic*) *mṛtyuṃ-jayati* (*sic*), the conquest of death, presumably in the interest of some kind of material immortality;" 287. It is clear that this is one of his major pieces of evidence for his thesis that Tantrism in India is the product of Daoist stimulus, and his case is significantly weakened if it is not valid.

3167 The earliest textual evidence Needham cites to my knowledge of activities corresponding to those of the Chinese alchemists are found in discussion of the preparation of mercury in texts Needham says date to the sixth century, namely the *Vāsavadatta* and the *Daśakumāra-carita;* V:5, 277.

3168 Needham V:4, 355.

3169 Needham V:4, 491. "Macrobiotic" is Needham's term for techniques that seek longevity or immortality by the aid of chemical knowledge; 355.

3170 Needham V:4, 330-331.

Cornelian Law passed at Rome in 81 B.C.E.[3171] Thus, he argues there is a clear chronological lead in China over the West in both these respects, and he speculates that perhaps the exploratory journeys of Zhang Qian, or like voyages, were a possible conduit of these ideas.

Needham backs the picture suggested by these dates with an argument from the etymology of the words for "alchemy" in different languages, including, ultimately, the English word. First, he notes that no such word "appears in the Mediterranean region before about 300 [C.E.],"[3172] the first use appearing in the writings of Zosimus of Panapolis or soon before him in the third century.[3173] Even in writings with alchemical content prior to that date, the word does not appear. Needham discusses various theories that have been proposed about the origins of this word, and argues that the Greek root *chem-* may be ultimately derived from Chinese *jin* 金, as in *lianjinshu* 煉金術,[3174] and that this may also be the source of Arabic *al-kīmiyā.*[3175]

Thus, to sum up, Needham sees an alchemical complex of aurifaction, aurifiction, "macrobiotics", and the term *chem-* and cognates, as originating in China and thence being

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[3171] Needham V:4, 322; he cites apparent early occurrences at 340, 344. If aurifiction is evidence of aurifaction (and it is not clear why Needham thinks it is), and further, if the Romans found it necessary to prohibit aurifiction as early as 81 BCE, it does not seem that there is very much to assure us, on the slender historical evidence Needham cites, that aurifiction, at least, was earlier in China than in Rome; Needham, however, passes over this problem in silence (or, rather, with much noisy hand-waving in other directions).

[3172] Needham V:4, 339.

[3173] Needham V:4, 345.

[3174] Needham V:4, 353.

[3175] Needham V:4, 355. I do not feel able to assess the plausibility of this argument from the standpoint of historical linguistics.

diffused by various routes at various times to other major civilisations on the Eurasian continent.[3176]

So far so good; I am prepared to accept for the moment Needham's assertions about fields beyond my knowledge, such as Greek and Roman materials, and as we have seen above, the Buddhist evidence we have examined would certainly be consistent with such a diffusion in its timing, which is significantly later than all the developments Needham points to in China, and in some cases, remarkably close (say, sometime in the fourth century) to Needham's proposed dates of diffusion from China to India. But what exactly is the place of sexual practices in all of this, and whence then the link with Tantrism?

Following scholars like Filliozat, who saw Tantrism as "deeply indebted to Chinese influences",[3177] Needham argues that the diffusion of the alchemical complex was a catalyst in the emergence of Tantrism. He adduces various scrappy items of evidence in support of this contention: that Tantrism "appears initially at several of the phase boundaries of Indian civilisation", i.e. Assam, East Bengal, Gandhāra, and Tamilnad; that King Bhāskara Kumāra of Kāmarūpa (Assam) requested a translation of the *Dao de jing* in 644; that Buddhist tantras refer to sets of *cīnācāra* or "Chinese practices"; that a text called the *Mahācīna-kramācāra Tantra* tells of the journey of the sage Vaśiṣṭha to China to learn erotic techniques of liberation "from Vishnu or some avatar of the Buddha"; etc.[3178] He also argues that there is an "uncanny resemblance between the system of the *nadī* and the *cakra* on the one hand, and the tracts, acu-

[3176] Needham provides a handy, convoluted diagram summarising his view of these matters at V:4, 504. The picture is somewhat complicated by the fact that he also recognises a centre of aurifaction and aurifiction in Hellenistic Egypt, but since he does not see this as having exerted any influence on Indic or Chinese religious developments, that need not detain us here.

[3177] Needham V:5, 283.

[3178] Needham V:5, 284.

points and larger spatial entities ('pools', 'fields', domains, Courts etc.) of ancient Chinese medicine on the other;"[3179] Needham argues further that these physiological models in China far predate their counterparts in India (and are, moreover, a "very natural development in that 'hydraulic-bureaucratic' civilisation"!).[3180]

Some of these pieces of evidence are indeed suggestive of significant parallels between Chinese Daoist and Indian Tantric ideas and practices, and may in fact be evidence of cross-cultural contact and influence in one direction or another. In order that we can be sure the *direction* of this influence was from China to India, however, as Needham rightly recognises, we would ideally want to see evidence that some plausible flow of such ideas and practices took place in that direction prior to the rise of Tantric interest in sexual practices in India. Otherwise, the development of such practices in India might be entirely independent, other parts of the putative "alchemical complex" notwithstanding, and we might in fact be faced with a situation of polygenesis and not diffusion.

When we sift through these various arguments and align them against what can be confidently known about the chronology of all these developments, however, it turns out that there is very little to go on. First of all, Needham's date of 400 for the development of a Tantrism characterised by sexual rites is too early. One looks in vain in Needham's book for any solid support for this date. The primary pieces of evidence he adduces seem to be the following. First, he accepts the association of the name of Asaṇga (active c. 400) with the Tantric movement, seemingly because of the traditional ascription to him of the *Guhya-samāja-tantra.*[3181]

[3179] Needham V:5, 263-264, 287.

[3180] Needham V:5, 265.

[3181] Needham V:5, 260.

Needless to say, however, such ascriptions are rife in the tradition, and, as in this case, not usually plausible. Second, Needham follows unnamed sources[3182] in reading the single reference in the *Mahāyāna-sūtrâlaṃkāra* to *maithunasya parāvṛttau,* "the reversion of the sexual", as referring to a practice similar to the Daoist *huanjing* 還精*,* i.e. his "*coitus thesauratus*".[3183] Needham even says elsewhere that "sexual yoga was in full swing" in India by the second century C.E., on the basis of one reference to the *suṣumṇā* vessel in the *Maitrāyaṇī Upaniṣad* and a statement in the *Yogatattva Upaniṣad* that "by the retention of the semen the yogin's body develops an agreeable perfume".[3184] Suggestive as these scattered items may be, they scarcely constitute evidence of widespread ritual sexual activity in Indian religious culture.

If we are to dismiss this evidence and consider a later and more reasonable date for the beginnings of sexual activity to religious ends in India, however, then we must first observe that to some extent, the question of Chinese influence becomes moot for the consideration of the question of how integral the link is between the parts of Needham's supposed alchemical complex. The evidence we have found in our Buddhist texts alone shows that aurifaction and the quest for immortality through elixirs was known by 400 C.E., and if the sexual arm of the complex did not arrive in India until much later, then that begs the question of the exact sense in which we are dealing, at this date, with a single "complex" at all. Perhaps, rather, we are dealing with several strands of sometimes related ideas, which were woven into a close synthesis by Ge Hong, certainly, as early as the fourth century, but which otherwise may have

[3182] Probably Lévi, Bachi etc.; see citations in Dasgupta, *Tantric Buddhism,* 53; I have already treated this question in §5.2.2, where I noted some other scattered pieces of possible evidence for like practices, and discussed problems with reading them as straightforward evidence of "Tantrism", in n. 2470.

[3183] V:5, 274-275.

[3184] V:5, 274; once more, Needham seems oblivious to the problem that, if the dating to the second century is correct, this would have made this reference earlier than all evidence he can cite of similar practices in China (though not as early as the assertion in the Mawangdui "He yinyang" that by not ejaculating one can endure for as long as Heaven and Earth).

drifted in and out of relation for centuries before they became firmly associated in the better-known complexes of esoteric-alchemical practices of India, China and Tibet as late as the second millennium.

We should further note, however, that even allowing that Needham's date for the beginnings of sexual activity to religious ends must be pushed forward considerably, most of the pieces of evidence mentioned above are too late to show that such developments, when we do see them, are in fact due to Chinese influence. Very little of this evidence dates any earlier than the Tang, and everything that is earlier, as we have seen, is flimsy. (The one piece of evidence that looks quite exciting at first sight – a convention that Tamilnaḍu *siddhars* were of Chinese origin or went to China as early as the third century! – unfortunately also crumbles under closer scrutiny.[3185])

[3185] Needham V:5, 285. Needham is very keen to regard these legends as historical facts. He says, without giving evidence or citing sources, that some are "considered historical", and then mentions Bogar (var. Bhogar, Bōgar), who he says is supposed to have been a Chinese who settled in Tamilnad "in the third century", and another likewise known to the tradition as Pulipani.

It is therefore worth considering his claims about Bhōgar in particular a little detail, since Bhōgar is a key figure in the *siddhar* tradition, and if it were true that he came from China at the date he did, this would be quite a significant piece of evidence for Needham's thesis. As is sometimes his wont when presenting what appears to be his most exciting evidence, however, Needham is frustratingly chary with references to any sources for this information. Wherever he got these ideas, though, it seems that we cannot safely regard them as anything more than interesting traditions, and that there is little grounds for reassurance that they tell us anything about a period so early as Needham suggests.

It is not as certain as Needham suggests that Bhōgar was indeed Chinese. Subbarayappa follows Iyer in saying that Bhōgar is Chinese (referring to Veeraraghava Iyer, K.C.: "The Study of Alchemy in Tamiladu, South India", in H.N. Datta, et al, eds, *Acharya P.C. Ray Commemoration Volume*, Calcutta: N.C. Paul Publishers, 1932, 460-67); Iyer is also one of Needham's sources, fn. "b", 5, V, 285. Venkatraman is sceptical of Sastri's reiteration of the claim that Bhōgar is a "pre-Christian Taoist immigrant", which he says Sastri does not substantiate; Venkatraman 21 n. 46. Ganapathy cites a number of conflicting traditions about the origins of Bogar in verses attributed to Bhōgar himself, it is said that he was a goldsmith of the eighteenth generation; his disciple Karuvūrār says he was of the caste of pot-maker; the *Agastiyar-12000* says he was Chinese, a disciple of the Chinese Kālāṅgi, who also lived in China (though Ganapathy's text continues in a vein that makes it sound as if Bhōgar merely visited China, not that he was actually Chinese; thus he "returned" to Indian, etc.). Ganapathy does not accept that Bhōgar was Chinese, though for confused reasons; 56-57. In his very confusing book, Pillai does not mention any tradition that Pulippāṇi was Chinese, and does not consider this question in relation to Bhōgar at all.

Whether or not Bhōgar was Chinese, however, the tradition seems to be agreed that he went to China, and that his own master, Kālāṅgi-natha, once more whether or not he was Chinese, taught Bhōgar in China. This tradition is of interest regardless of its historical veracity. The narrative acrobatics performed in order to explain that Kālāṅgi, though Bhōgar had to go all the way to China to learn from

In fact, Needham's arguments about dates become even weaker when we realise that for the earlier phase of his story of Chinese influence on Tantrism, he relies quite heavily on the affinity of Indian and Chinese developments specifically in the domain of sexual religious practices. Quite aside from the house of cards he builds from the small number of early citations we just considered, this is also clear in the way he characterises "Tantrism", as the phenomenon whose rise in India he is concerned to account for. It is significant that one way he puts this is to say, "Sex as a way of salvation has something suspiciously Chinese about it;"[3186]

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him, was nonetheless Indian are impressively convoluted: he had attained a state of immortality after living already for 315 years, and decided to make China the centre of his teaching activities, for unstated reasons. Certainly, the simplest interpretation would be that he was Chinese, and that the tradition, somehow embarrassed by this fact, has constructed a legendary denial of this provenance. Whether Bhōgar himself is Chinese or Indian by birth would then make little difference to the central point, which is that key teachings in the tradition would indeed have derived from China.

The important question, next, then, is Needham's third century date for Bhōgar. On the question of Bhōgar's dates, most of the sources I was able to consult were useless, since they relate events from 3012 BCE, lifespans of hundreds of years, etc., with a perfectly straight face. (It should be noted that this scholarship on Bhōgar and the eighteen *siddhars* in general is often written from an overt believer's perspective, and presents traditional and transparently legendary material uncritically; this makes it very difficult to rely on it for any questions of fact.) Among relatively sober sources, Subbarayappa says, "Although Tamil tradition accords remote antiquity to them, Agastyar, Tirumular, and Bhogar might have lived in the fifth to sixth century and the other Siddhas were of a later date;" though he does not explain the reasoning behind this date. The question is complicated even further by the fact that, as so often in such traditions, there may have been a number of figures with the same name: Venkatraman discusses at least three Bhōgars, more than one of whom had a disciple called Pulippāṇi; see e.g. Venkatraman 13 n. 4, 49, etc. Of these, the *earliest,* his "Bhōgar I", "a Sanmārgasiddha, he assigns to c. 10th-11th century! Venkataraman further notes that the *Bhōgar-7000,* one of the main sources relied on by some scholars for information about Bhōgar's life, includes "his inventions of steam locomotive, steam ship, air balloon, aeroplane and parachute", and further includes a scene where "Bhōgar blesses one of his disciples to live as gloriously as Guṇaṅguḍi Mastān, who lived in the 19th century;" 163. These details surely must make us regard such sources with caution when trying to determine what may have happened in the third century CE.

This foray into the muddy waters of early Tamil *siddhar* history shows, surely, that Needham is overly enthusiastic and hasty when he says, for example, "The whole pattern testifies of close relations between Taoism and South Indian Tantrism in the 3rd century, when the lists of *sittars* begin, and the 10th, when their succession reached its apogee;" 5, V, 285. The question remains, of course, why the tradition would include the conceit that he at least travelled to China to learn important techniques and doctrines, regardless of when he lived (or whether he is indeed an entirely legendary figure) and what his actual ethnicity was. This would certainly seem, along with terms for alchemical substances and practices including the word "Chinese" etc., to suggest that there was an association of alchemy with China in the Indian religious imagination. It is anyone's guess whether this fact in turn attests more to historical fact, or does not rather stem, for instance, from the same kinds of romanticising of exotic locales that gives us the Tibet that features in the writings of Madame Blavatsky.

[3186] Needham V:5, 283.

elsewhere, he also gives prominence of place to the "great weight . . . laid on the importance of sex" in his crude sketch of the history of the movement.[3187] It is part of this same pattern of characterising the Daoist connection in Tantrism primarily by means of the interest of the latter in sex that Needham also argues, as a further reason that Tantrism was probably catalysed by a Daoist stimulus, that sexual practices toward spiritual salvation back before the common era in China,[3188] whereas they only arise in India from the fourth century onwards (*sic*). In other words, when Needham says that "Tantrism" in India was influenced by an influx of Daoist ideas from China, despite his adversion elsewhere to other parts of the alchemical complex, he is thinking primarily, especially in the earliest period, of Daoist sexual hygiene stimulating a Tantric turn to ritualised sexual encounter as a means to liberation. Absent his evidence for the early dating of the Chinese influence he posits, and the sexual practices that supposedly arise as a result of this influence, and much of Needham's whole story about not just the rise of Tantrism, but even the earliest spread of alchemy *per se* to India, begins to totter precariously.

It is here, I argue, that the evidence we have examined above from the Chinese Buddhist canon comes to the fore. As we saw, neither Needham nor Waley, upon whom he relies so implicitly for knowledge of these materials, ever thought to look for material relating to the quest for immortality by elixirs at all; the consideration of "alchemy" as evidence by these materials is in both scholars restricted entirely to the notion of aurifaction. Even in the case of the materials

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[3187] Needham V:5, 260.

[3188] Needham V:5, 281, referring to "early sexual interpretations of the *Dao de jing*" (referring to the *Heshang gong* commentary; see above n. 3165), *Chu ci* poems as analysed by Waley and Hawkes, sexological works listed in the bibliography in the *Qian Han shu,* etc. In this case, despite the air of romantic Sinophilia that hangs about Needham's pronouncements on some of these texts, he has been spectacularly vindicated, as we saw above, by the Mawangdui finds (see above, p. 1470), at least if we are willing to admit both "enduring as long as Heaven and Earth" and the goals of Tantric liberatory practice into the same rubric of "spiritual salvation".

on aurifaction, there were many references that they missed, and errors in dating, or of omission in failing to notice parallels in earlier versions of texts, meant that they failed to observe how closely all the first evidence of aurifaction clusters around the early fifth century. In combination, therefore, the evidence we examined above for the striking outburst of awareness of ideas about both aurifaction and the attainment of elixirs, in a band of texts concentrated in the early fifth century in the Chinese record, lends support from an unexpected quarter to parts of Needham's diffusionist theory, just when the failure of his sexual theories threatened to undermine it entirely.

We must remember two things about the nature of this evidence at this juncture. First, and most significantly, despite the fact that we examined this evidence primarily through the Chinese versions of the texts, and determined chronology to a first approximation on the basis of dates of translation into Chinese, the texts themselves are not Chinese. They are, rather, Indic texts, and the large number of these texts, and the large number of separate translators of those texts, precludes the possibility that these ideas could somehow have crept into all the texts in the translation process. In other words, it is certain, despite the fact that we have our access to these texts via China, that they show us a phase in the history of Buddhist ideas somewhere in the Indian cultural sphere, and that the impingement of alchemical ideas they reflect was an impingement into the Indian cultural sphere, whether or not the ideas originated in China. Second, we should also remember that the single instance of Buddhabhadra's *Avataṃsaka,* which says that the same drug can be used to make gold and also grants immortality, and also the complete coincidence of timing and partial overlap in texts that attest to these two sets of ideas more generally, suggest that aurifaction and the pursuit of immortality by elixir, at least, were linked when they impinged upon this Indian Buddhist world, and not just in China. To this extent, then, aurifaction and the pursuit of immortality

seem indeed to have been part of a single complex, and the complex so formed warrants the name "alchemy", even at this date in history.

Bearing in mind the weakness of much of Needham's own evidence for the early part of the history of diffusion he traces from China to India, then, the new evidence we have reviewed above for the first impact of ideas of alchemical aurifaction and pursuit of immortality on the Buddhist world is left as one of the main solid pieces of evidence for any such impact at such an early date. It seems inconceivable to me that anyone could claim, in the face of such a broad range of various mentions in this number of texts, that these alchemical ideas had not become quite widely known in the cultural world that gave rise to the texts, probably some time in the fourth century at the latest. Moreover, given the sound evidence that Needham cites to show that both alchemical aurifaction and pursuit of immortality were known in China well before this date, diffusion from China of those ideas does seem the most logical explanation for the phenomena here under study.

In sum, then, I would argue that Needham's arguments for the diffusion of alchemy to India from China would appear, on the basis at least of the Buddhist evidence we have examined, to be right, at least so far as ideas of aurifaction and the quest for immortality go. Further, however, a critical examination of his own evidence for those arguments suggests that he was right for the wrong reasons, and in particular, that he was mistaken to rest so much of his argument on the supposed sexual dimensions of the (supposed) complex. Even though we know that sexual practices were ultimately incorporated with the quest for immortality and aurifaction in later systems in both India and China, I have not seen any strong evidence for the claim that ritual sex was an element of the "alchemical complex", at least in any spread outside

China, in this early period. Indeed, if our Buddhist evidence is anything to go by, ideas about aurifaction and immortality were firmly dissociated from ritual sex in this period.

This observation has two further implications. First, that the question of a possible Chinese influence on the actual rise of ritual sexual practices in India remains an open question, and conversely, despite the genuine precedents in the Chinese record, it also remains an open possibility that those practices developed independently in India and then exerted a subsequent influence on Chinese religions with the spread of Tantrism proper in the eighth century. Second, whether or not there was any influence in either direction in these later developments, in the meantime, we need to correct Needham and dissociate sexual practices from his putative alchemical complex, and think rather in terms of the spread of a complex of ideas primarily about just aurifaction and the attainment of immortality by proto-chemical and pharmacopoeiac means.

Indeed, if a short coda to this complex consideration of the implications of our Buddhist evidence for alchemical history is permissible, part of this lesson here can be turned back on the Chinese case itself, and we can ask to what extent sexual practices were in fact related with these other dimensions of alchemy in this period. It is true, as we have noted above, that there certainly was some connection between sexual practices and other parts of Needham's alchemical complex prior to this time in China. However, even in the case of the non-Buddhist Chinese record, it is difficult to be sure how close or constant this connection was. Douglas Wile, for example, states that though "Ko Hung [Ge Hong] announced the existence of a sexual elixir school in his fourth century *Pao P'u tzu* [*Baopuzi*], and Tseng Tsao's [Zeng Zao] tenth century *Tao shu* [*Dao shu*] outlined its theory," "our earliest complete texts in this tradition,

however, are not until the Ming".[3189] Needham himself adduces no significant texts other than Ge Hong prior to much later periods to evidence the overt connection to alchemical practice,[3190] and he notes that for Ge Hong, even, sexual practices were a *sine qua non* but not sufficient in and of themselves, but rather still an "auxiliary rather than a determining factor".[3191] Though he is consistently inclined to a perennialist essentialisation of the tradition and is therefore frequently anarchically anachronistic in his treatment of historical materials, Needham himself is further forced to acknowledge that "the search for the elixir predominated during earlier times, perhaps down to the end of the golden period of laboratory alchemy in the Tang, before 800 C.E., while the search for the enchymoma [Needham's term for *neidan* 內丹] became dominant during subsequent times."[3192] It is entirely possible, then, that it was only later in Chinese history – and perhaps under Indian Tantric influence, ironically enough – that Ge Hong's prophetic anticipation of the full outlines of Needham's complex was taken up again, and sexual rites incorporated into a full panoply of internal and external alchemical practices.

5. Conclusions: alchemy and the immortal, adamant body of the Buddha

Setting aside alchemical history, then, and returning to the question of embodiments in Buddhist doctrinal history, it seems to me that a critically modified version of Needham's diffusionist thesis provides us with a backdrop against which to consider the evidence we have examined above, attesting to a new set of ideas about embodiments of the Buddha in the fourth century (as attested by the wave of translations in the Chinese canon around and soon after

[3189] Wile 146.

[3190] A fact somewhat obscured by the fact that Needham frustratingly opts for an avowedly anachronistic mode of presentation; see V:5, 185.

[3191] V:5, 209-211.

[3192] Needham V:5, 35.

400). As we have seen, around this time, Buddhist texts began to proclaim that the present (Śākyamuni's) body was actually immortal, appearances to the contrary notwithstanding, and, in an associated development, that it was an adamant body (*vajrakāya*). At the same time, we also see the first irruption into the world of Buddhist ideas – often into the same texts – of an awareness of ideas, frequently rejected as such by Buddhists, that it is possible to transform base matter into gold or to attain personal immortality through the use of elixirs and/or magic. I argued in Chapter 5.1 that there is ample evidence of internal Buddhist dynamics to account for most or all of the developments that led to the idea of an immortal Buddha embodied in adamant. Nonetheless, it seems possible that an additional factor in this development might therefore have been new ideas about physical immortality associated with the alchemical complex. If this was the case, it seems most likely that the alchemical ideas as a loose model, and further that these Buddhist ideas may have been presented as a "genuine Buddhist article" to *compete against* the presumable allure of such fabulous promises.

It is important to note, however, as I already argued at the end of Chapter 5.1, that these ideas cannot be entirely accounted for by this dynamic. The idea that attainment of a Buddhist *summum bonum* could vouchsafe an "undying" state, as we have seen, was as old as Buddhism itself, and the extensive early discourse of *amata/amṛta* we examined in Chapter 2. This old idea of "the undying" certainly represented a fertile native soil upon which the exotic seeds of alchemical ideas about immortality could fall and thrive. As we have also seen, Buddhism had also, as part of its ruminations on the implications of the immense merit accrued by the Buddha over aeons of assiduous *bodhisattva* practices, developed independently the idea that he could, should he so wish, infinitely prolong his lifespan at will; and this idea was further connected with his mastery of the *ṛddhipāda* and *abhijñā.* This potential extreme or infinite longevity was early on parlayed into actuality, first, in the case of cosmically remote Buddhas like Amitābha,

and also in the case of other beings who dwelt similarly in realms remote in time or space. The first sign of the application of these ideas to Śākyamuni is found in Dharmarakṣa's *Lotus Sūtra,* before they explode into a range of texts in the fourth century, and I have connected the timing of this development with the articulation of the doctrine of the *dharmakāya* and associated developments in docetistic Buddhalogy more broadly. Finally, I have also suggested that we must see these developments in the large frame of the history of ideas about the Buddha's embodiments most generally, in which frame they appear as a part of a general ferment in new ideas about embodiment that begins with the elaboration of *dharmakāya* and *rūpakāya* in the third century, and goes into overdrive in the fourth with a whole raft of new ideas.

In this light, therefore, even if the impact of alchemical ideas on the Buddhist cultural world may have been one factor in bringing it about that actual immortality began to be predicated of the present Buddha, surely drew on all of these currents, and did not only stem from the possible alchemical influence we have traced here.

Appendix 3 (to Chapter 5.1): A refutation of Iwamatsu Asao's claim that the underlying form of Amitābha's name is *Amṛta

In studying the emergence of the idea that Buddhas are immortal, the results of which study are presented above in Chapter 5.2, I was initially attracted to the claim, set forth in greatest detail by Iwamatsu Asao, that the original underlying Indic name of the Buddha Amitābha (of the *Sukhāvatīvyūha-sūtras*) might have been *Amṛta. Of course, one of the names of this Buddha is Amitāyus, "Measureless Longevity" (the other being, of course, Amitābha, "Measureless Light"),[3193] a fact that already suggests the centrality of the promise of endless life to the Sukhāvatī cult. If, however, the original underlying name was simply *Amṛta, "undying", it would suggest a close and exciting equivalence between buddhahood and the undying in the mindset that produced the original cult, and I thought it would have constituted a strong piece of further evidence that the nascent idea of immortality was emergent in that context and period.

However, after further examination of this question,[3194] I believe that Iwamatsu's arguments do not stand up, and that his claim is evidentially largely baseless and unlikely to be true.

Iwamatsu studies the East Asian transliteration of the name, 阿彌陀 (Ch. Amituo, Jpn. Amida), and its relation to possible Indic antecedents, from the point of view of historical phonology. He raises a number of arguments, which are suggestive at first blush, to support his contention that the Indic underlying 阿彌陀 is quite likely to be neither Amitābha nor Amitāyus, but

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[3193] Both of these names are attested in the Sanskrit versions of the *sūtra;* Iwamatsu, "Amida butsu no gengo", 13. In this article, Iwamatsu also summarises some of the various questions that have been raised in secondary scholarship regarding these two names and their relation to the East Asian Amituo/Amida 阿彌陀.

[3194] This further study was prompted and guided by generous suggestions on the topic from Professor Jan Nattier, and I am very grateful to her for this help.

**amṛta,* the very same term for "undying" (Pāli *amata*) that we studied above in the Pāli canonical context.[3195] Among the more interesting of these arguments are: that Sanskrit –*mita* or *mitā* is never otherwise transcribed 彌陀 in Chinese, but rather, e.g. in the works of Lokakṣema that constitute our earliest witness for the name 阿彌陀, such elements are consistently transcribed rather with 蜜;[3196] that, conversely, in places where the character 彌 *is* used, it can reflect syllables ending in –*r*;[3197] that Karlgren's reconstruction of Zhou Chinese shows that that 彌 may have had a final -*r* at one point (though this data is for a period remote

[3195] See p 177 ff. Iwamatsu notes that the suggestion that either *amṛta* or *amita* alone might underlie Ch. 阿彌陀 was proposed as early as the late Meiji, but that the suggestion was dropped by scholars for want of direct textual proof; "Amida butsu no gengo", 15. Jan Nattier suggests that this theory was first proposed by Wogihara Unrai in his 1909 paper "Mishichū (Viṣṇu) to Amida" 微瑟紐 (Viṣṇu) と阿弥陀; Nattier, "Names of Amitābha", 188.

[3196] Iwamatsu, "Amida butsu no gengo", 16. One possible difficulty with Iwamatsu's argument here is that he argues so heavily from the corpus of Lokakṣema, where, as we have seen above, the T361 translation of the *Sukhāvatīvyūha* attributed to Lokakṣema is not generally regarded as actually his work (see above n. 2276). However, this transcription is also attested in the Lokakṣema *Pratyutpanna-buddha-saṃmukhâvasthita-samādhi-sūtra* 般舟三昧經 T418 discussed above (ten times at 905a07-b14, and once more at 906c13-907a1). Harrison notes that "it appears that Lokakṣema's translation underwent revision at some stage;" the prose passages, however, in which the name Amituo appears, underwent only "minor alterations"; *Pratyutpanna* xvi. Note also that the same transcription is used in the corresponding passage at T419.922a04-b13, in a text that Harrison also assigns to the "late Han or soon after"; xvi. Thus, it seems that we are safe in regarding this transcription, with Iwamatsu, as genuinely characteristic of Lokakṣema's idiom, and as dating as early as possible in the Chinese record. The same transcription also appears in another work attributed to Lokakṣema, the 般舟三昧經 T417 (at 899a11, 899a28, 899a29), but Harrison says of this text, an alternate version of the same text as T418, that it is "undoubtedly a later and anonymous abridgement of T418"; *Pratyutpanna,* xvi.

[3197] E.g. in 須彌 for Sumeru; "Amida butsu no gengo", 17. Cf. also two passages in the *Druma-kinnara-rāja-paripṛcchā-sūtra* 佛說伅真陀羅所問如來三昧經 where the name of a former wheel-turning king is given as 尼彌陀羅, T624. 363b10-11, 363b20-21; these must be the passages Iwamatsu is referring to, 16, when he says this is a transliteration of "Nimindhara"; Tib. has *sa 'dzin,* Harrison, *Druma-kinnara-rāja-paripṛcchā-sūtra* 227, 229, which would surely correspond to the name of the outermost of the seven concentric mountains of this world-system, the "holder of the wheel" but also therefore the "[up]holder of [the entire] earth"; for the same transcription as the name of the mountain, see e.g. the four instances at *Dīrghâgama* T1.146a29-b04 and 146c04-06. In the case of 尼彌陀羅, too, then, 彌 transliterates a syllable with a voiced final (-*n*) before a dental (Iwamatsu further posits the possibility that a prākṛtisation had led to the voicing of the final dental in *amṛta* > **amṛda,* and says that such instances of voicing of an intervocalic consonant are known in Gandhāra*;* 17).

from the Han);[3198] and that a process of prākṛtisation is conceivable whereby Skt *amṛta* yields Middle Indic *amita, amṛda* etc., but the reverse evolution is very difficult to conceive.[3199]

Iwamatsu also adduces in support of his claim Buddha names in the *Xianzai xian jie qian fo ming jing* 現在賢劫千佛名經 T447, the "Sutra of the Names of the Buddhas of the [Present] *Kalpa* of the Worthies"[3200] which include the elements *amita* "limitless" or *amṛta* "immortal/ambrosia". Among the Buddha names in this sutra are twenty-one names that include either of these elements, and Iwamatsu shows that in many cases the two are confounded for the same name in different extant versions of the text. He further notes that amongst the names given in this text, there are several which include either element *amita* or *amṛta* alone, that is, without compounding with other elements, and that in fact, such names are more numerous in the text than either Amitābha or Amitāyus.[3201]

[3198] Iwamatsu, "Amida butsu no gengo", 16; Karlgren's reconstruction is *mi̯ăr.*

[3199] Iwamatsu, "'Muryō' to 'kanro'", 188. Nattier notes, however, after Fujita, that the only Prākṛts we have for *amṛta* are Pāli *amata* and one Gāndhārī *amuda*; the Prākṛts suggested by Iwamatsu are not attested; Nattier, "Names of Amitābha", 188.

[3200] Iwamatsu lists various versions of this text, including Skt., Tib (2), Chin (5), Khotanese, and a variorum edition which includes further Mongolian, Manchu etc. in addition, he further mentions in a final note a Xixia version, which he held irrelevant to his work. Iwamatsu, "'Muryō' to 'kanro'", 184.

[3201] Suggestive though this is, at no point does Iwamatsu consider the problem that a text like this is certainly a highly artificial and even whimsical product, and the presence of a name in a list of more than a thousand such names gives us very little indication of the relative prevalence of such a name in actual discourses outside such artificial textual worlds. In other words, it is entirely possible that names of any given type may be multiplied for a variety of reasons in the bubble of such a text without this proliferation corresponding to anything in Buddhism at large. Think, for example, of lists of Bodhisattva names at the beginning of Mahāyāna sutras; on their basis, we might conclude, for example, that " bull elephant" of some sort is a more reasonable name for a Bodhisattva than "He Who Surveys the Worlds" . . .

On the basis of these various facts, Iwamatsu suggests that it is possible that the original name of the Buddha known to Japan as "Amida" was *amṛta,* or possibly one or another *prākṛt* for *amṛta,* such as *amita, amṛda* etc.[3202] However, I believe he is mistaken.

The main flaw in Iwamatsu's arguments is that he relies upon a very imprecise kind of historical phonology, which can be easily corrected on the basis of the information on Han pronunciation assembled by William South Coblin.[3203] In applying Coblin's data to Iwamatsu's problem, I have here merely followed the lead provided by Karashima Seishi, and by Jan Nattier, following him.[3204]

Nattier notes that in general, Lokakṣema typically did give relatively full transcriptions, as opposed to e.g. An Shigao, Zhi Qian etc.[3205] This lends a certain plausibility to Iwamatsu's contention:

> "To characterise his [Lokakṣema's] practice in very general terms, he seems to elide short internal vowels and many final ones . . . . He also regularly omits longer final segments of words, such as –(*i*)*ka* and –(*i*)*ta,* which he may have viewed as suffixes not integral to the names themselves." However, "in general it seems fair to say that his transcriptions attempt to represent foreign sounds . . . . as extensively as Chinese phonology would allow. Given this general pattern, the fact that *Amituo* is the only form of the name that appears in Lokakṣema's corpus would seem, at first glance, to

3202 In the very long fn. 1, 190-192, Iwamatsu he notes that he had already treated this question in an earlier work ("Amida butsu no gengo ni tsuite 阿弥陀仏の原語について", *Bukkyōgaku* 仏教学 4, 1977, 25-49), where he made some of the same suggestions, and he takes up a controversy with Fujita Kōtatsu, who had rebutted his earlier article on various points.

3203 William South Coblin's Han sound glosses, upon which I rely in what follows, were published in 1982, the same year as one of Iwamatsu's main articles on his hypothesis; Iwamatsu has continued to propound the hypothesis in more recent years, however, and does not make reference to Coblin's data.

3204 Nattier, "The Names"; I found it sufficient for my purposes to rely on the citations from Karashima's work therein. In this paper, Nattier calls the *Amṛta theory (Amitābha > *Amṛta/Amṛda etc.) "Wogihara's hypothesis", and does not refer to Iwamatsu's studies.

3205 Nattier, "The Names" 188-189.

> support the hypothesis that the Indic-language texts from which he was working did indeed read only **Amita*".[3206]

However, as Nattier shows, things are more complicated than this surface appearance might lead us to believe. Karashima Seishi has proposed, on the basis of the "recognition that Lokakṣema was surely working from Prakrit rather than Sanskrit texts", that the "intervocalic consonant –*bh*- of *Amitābha* would be likely to shift to -*h*- (and ultimately even further, to -'- or –*y*-) in northwest Indian Prakrit. This could imply, in turn, that the transcription *Amituo* might represent not an underlying **Amita,* but a Prakrit form of *Amitābha* such as **Amidāha* or **Amidā'a*".[3207]

To test this possibility further, Nattier studies Lokakṣema's transcriptions of other terms ending in –*bha* or –*bhā,* or their Prākṛt equivalents, and shows that he consistently elides –*bha* or its Prākṛt counterpart where the preceding vowel is –*a-,* but not where it is –*u*-. She therefore argues that where preceded by *a* or *ā, -bha* was consistently weakened to –*'a* and therefore not transcribed in Chinese, whereas after *u* it was weakened more usually to –*ha.*[3208]

Nattier then considers the comparison with the contrary case, where Lokakṣema transcribes words ending in –*ta* or the Prākṛt equivalent thereof. She concludes that the most common transcription is a final –*t*, but that where a word ends in –*ita,* it is often dropped entirely (perhaps as a suffix).[3209] This leads to the conclusion that it is unlikely that –*tuo* represents –*ta,* and therefore unlikely that *Amituo* represents **Amita.*

[3206] Nattier, "The Names" 189-190.

[3207] Nattier, "The Names" 190. Nattier further notes in a footnote that Karashima has also suggested that the name *Amitāyus* "limitless life" evolved on the basis of "a Middle Indic nominative singular form such as **Amidāhu -> -ā'u -> -āyu*"; 190 n. 25; citing Karashima "*Dai Amida kyō* yakuchū (1)", 141 n. 34.

[3208] Nattier, "The Names" 192.

[3209] Nattier, "The Names" 194.

Nattier further briefly considers the difficult prospect of examining the alternative possibility that the earliest form of the name might have been Amitāyus, only to conclude that the only source from the Han or Three Kingdoms containing an analogous transcription is the transcription of Brahmāyus in Zhi Qian's T76, which in any case does not look at all like Amituo; she thus concludes that "no transcription that might correspond to *–āyus* in a context where it might refer to Amida . . . can be found in any Han-period translation . . . . Han-period translations offer no evidence of the existence of the name 'Limitless Life' in any form".[3210]

Nattier's treatment of this question, however, proceeds on the assumption that the only two likely Indic antecedents are *Amitābha (or Prākṛt equivalents) or *Amita (or Prākṛt equivalents), and she compares only these two scenarios. Even if she has established by these arguments that *Amita is less likely than *Amitābha, her argument that Amitābha is therefore the antecedent of Amituo is weakened by the fact that she does not consider other possibilities. In particular, she does not consider the possibility that the vowel in the middle syllable might be *-ṛ-* rather than *–i-* or *–a/ā-* (as in *amṛta*), and neither does she consider the possibility, which is raised by Iwamatsu, that the initial consonant of the final syllable could be voiced *d-* (as in **amṛda, *amuda, *amida* etc.). Both possibilities are worth examining.

Iwamatsu, on the other hand, as I have already argued, is restricted by the fact that unlike Nattier, he does not avail himself of Coblin's Han reconstructions for Chinese pronunciation, but rather bases himself upon Karlgren, who reconstructs for periods very remote in time from Lokakṣema. We would do well in this respect to follow Nattier's example and check Iwamatsu's claims against Coblin's reconstructions.

[3210] Nattier, "The Names" 196.

Turning first to the question of the possibility that the vowel in question is *-ṛ-,* there is a possibility, even allowing for Nattier's and Karashima's arguments, that we are seeing a reflex of Sanskṛt ***amṛt**âbha* or a *prākṛt* equivalent. Nattier does not attempt to account for the medial *–j-* in Coblin's transcription *ʔâ-mjie-dâ.* In order to examine whether this might reflect an underlying vocalic *-ṛ-,* as Iwamatsu's hypothesis would seem to require, let us first looking at Skt. syllables with vocalic *ṛ* to see how it is reflected. Such syllables listed by Coblin are as follows:

Coblin 34	*rājagṛha*	羅閱祇	*lâ jiwät* ***gjie***	P. *rājagaha*
Coblin 35	*gṛdhrakūṭa*	耆闍崛	***gji*** *źja gjwət*	P. *gijjakūṭa*
Coblin 100	*bṛhatphala*	惟于潘	***ji****wi ju phwân*	P. *vehaphala*
Coblin 101	*avṛha*	阿惟潘	*ʔâ* ***ji****wi phwân*	P. *aviha*
Coblin 117	*bṛhatphala*	比伊潘羅	*bi* ***ʔi*** *phwân lâ*	
Coblin 118	*avṛha*	阿比耶陀	*ʔâ bi* ***jia*** *dâ*	
	**ṛṣisaptama*	鼓師薩沈	***źji-*** *ṣi sât ḍjəm*	P *isi sattama*
	sudṛśa	須蹄[3211]	*sju* ***tiei***	P. *sudassa*
	śśubhakṛtsna	首訶迦	*śjəu: xâ* ***kja****/ka*	

These data do seem to suggest that in most cases, there is a possible connection between the sound Coblin represents as *–j-* and the presence of a vocalic *-ṛ-* in the underlying Sanskrit word. Even in the apparently odd case of the syllable *jiwi* for *vṛ-* and *bṛ,* it seems most logical to assume that the closest Chinese phonology could come to representing such sounds was by a metathesis, so that *ji-* corresponds still to the *-ṛ-* and *wi* to the bilabials.[3212] We might also note that non-vocalic (medial) *–r-* can also correspond to the same element, as e.g. in *źja* for *gṛ**dhra**kūṭa* (Coblin 35).

[3211] I presume this character is equivalent, but Coblin has the foot radical beneath *dai.*

[3212] Cf. the example of Coblin 82, *vīrya,* for which *jiwi diei*; here the metathesis seems to have even occurred for *v-* and *–r* separated by a long vowel (unless this transcription is rather for **vṛddhi*?!, which would be easier to explain in light of other examples).

However, it seems from Coblin's comments upon the reconstruction of this medial *-j-* that it is very difficult to pin it down to any actual sound, and that it is possible that it is an instance of "purely theoretical formulations for which we are not yet able to supply convincing phonological detail".[3213] Coblin thus cannot even tell is *whether* this component in his reconstructions represents an actual phonologically realised sound, as opposed to a situation where it may, e.g. (with Pulleyblank) have arisen as a reflex of long vowels in a later period, or (with another Pulleyblank theory) as a reflex of accentation on two-mora syllables.[3214] Far less, then, can he tell us *what* sound it might represent. Coblin further cites examples from the later Tang period, "when there can be no doubt about the existence of medial *–j-*", where it is used in the transcription of (Tibetan) words in which it reflects no aspect of the original word whatsoever.

We also find, regardless of whether medial *–j-* might sometimes represent a vocalic *-ṛ,* that it is also perfectly possible for medial *–j-* to appear in syllables corresponding to a Sanskrit in plain *–i,* as would be required if the underlying syllable here is (*a-*)*mi-*(*tābha*). These include: 蜜 *mjiət* in *pāra**mi**tā* (Coblin 42) (with the complication that no element seems to represent *–tā* except the dental stop); 蜜 *mjiət* in *paranirmi**ta**vaśavartin* (Coblin 91), (again for *mita* as a whole); 密 *mjiət* in the same role (Coblin 110); 甄 *tśjiən* in ***kiṃ**nara* (Coblin 86); 貳 *ńźi* (*sic* ń) in *aka**ni**ṣṭha* (Coblin 105); 訖 *kjət* in ****hi**raṇyavarṇa* (Coblin 156)*;* 耆 *gji* in *aparā**ji**ta* (Coblin 276), etc. These examples clearly show that whether or not medial *–j-* can indeed sometimes represent vocalic *-ṛ,* there is no reason for confidence that the medial *–j-* of *mjie* in *ʔâ-mjie-dâ* represents an underlying vocalic *-ṛ-* at any stage in the history of the Indic word behind the transcription, since in

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[3213] Coblin 78.

[3214] Coblin 78.

numerous cases, it is found in words that have a simple short -*i*- vowel right back to the Sanskrit.

We can thus conclude that Iwamatsu is mistaken, in basing himself upon the examination of such a small number of words in Karlgren's reconstructions, and that there are no phonological grounds for suspecting the presence of a vocalic -*ṛ* at any stage in the underlying Indic prototype of *ʔâ-mjie-dâ.*

For the same of completeness, we might also examine the remainder of the final in *mjie.* At first glance, it seems that Sanskrit syllables in plain -*i* tend to be reflected by -*iei* or just -*i,* not -*jie.* In *ʔâ-mjie-dâ,* however, the final is -*jie;* we are therefore justified in asking whether there is any significance in the contrast between -*jie* and -*iei* regarding what they tell us about underlying Indic sounds.

It does not seem there is a systematic contrast, however. First, -*iei* does indeed often represent a short or long -*i* in the underlying Sanskrit word; thus, we find *diei* in *Prajāpa**ti*** (Coblin 62); *diei* in ***Dī**paṃkara* (Coblin 64); *diei* in *kṣān**ti*** (Coblin 83); *niei* in ***nir**māṇarati* (Coblin 90); *diei* in *abhira**ti*** (Coblin 198); etc. But it can also represent *guṇa* and *vṛddhi* forms of the same vowel: *biei- liei-* for *pre(ta)* (Coblin 129), where -*iei* reflects a strengthened rather than a pure form of -*i;* likewise *niei-* in ***nai**vasaṃ* (Coblin 130); *diei* in *pūrvavi**de**ha* (Coblin 188); *sje* in *parā**sī**ka* (Coblin 225); *mjie:* in *Kosam**bī*** (Coblin 231); *sje* in *mana**svī*** and so on. We also find even stranger instances where the underlying vowel is no form of -*i* at all: *tiei* in *su**dṛ**sa* (Coblin 103) and *su**dar**śana* (Coblin 104), where -*iei* reflects -*a*; etc.

On the other hand, we might note first that *-jie* seems most typically to represent *guṇa* or *vṛddhi* forms of Skt –*i* (*-e, -ai*). Thus, we find *mjie* (here also 彌) in ***Mai**treya* (Coblin 40, overlooking for the moment problems with the latter syllables of this name); *bjie* in *asaṃ**khye**ya* (Coblin 50); *mjie* in *su**me**[ru]* (Coblin 131); *xwjie* in *****ve**da* (?) (Coblin 166b); *niet* (*la*) in ***net**raśrī* (Coblin 168); *xwjie* in ***Vai**rocana* (Coblin 183); *xjwie* in ***vai**śālī* (Coblin 222); cf. also the similar *tśje/gjie* in ***Je**tavana* (Coblin 266). On the other hand, we also find (fewer) examples where –*jie* corresponds to Skt. –*i/-ī*: *źje* for a plain (long) –*ī* in *saṃpa**dī*** (Coblin 261), and in *bjie* for *ma**ghī*** (Coblin 70).[3215]

In sum, then, it is possible, if not equally likely, that –*iei* and –*jie* can correspond to both pure and strengthened forms of the vowel –*i* in Sanskrit, and therefore it is entirely possible that *mjie* in *ʔâ-mjie-dâ* might represent –*mi-,* as it would have to if the underlying form is Amitābha or an equivalent. On this score, too, then, there is no reason to suspect that the underlying Indic was anything other than **amidā'a.*

This means that the transcription syllable *mjie* is entirely consistent with the hypothesis Nattier puts forth with Karashima.

Finally, I also considered when Lokakṣema uses 陀 *dâ,* because Iwamatsu claims that it, too, reflects a sound associated with some form of –*r-,* and I wanted to see whether or not we could eliminate that contention. It is indeed notable that the bulk of Lokakṣema's uses of 陀 in transcription are for dentals or nasals that are either voiced, aspirated, clustered/geminated, or

[3215] The odd *gjie* for *rājagṛ**ha*** (Coblin 34) may perhaps be explained by the fact that the context would lead us to expect a locative in the Sanskrit or equivalent Indic text in this locus (佛在羅閱祇, T224.425c06). It is also difficult, for a number of reasons, to explain *gjie* for *suda**rśa**na* (Coblin 104), or *śje* in *suda**rśa**na* (Coblin 119). The text reads *sju teie- tśje nəu;* perhaps we have a metathesis here too, and the –*j*- represents the –*r* preceding the *ś*; it is still difficult to understand how *g*- could represent *ś*- however; and this still does not explain the –*je* for –*a*-.

some combination of these. (In the following list, Coblin numbers refer to the numbers given to individual transcriptions in his list of data from Lokakṣema's transcriptions, 242-253). Thus e.g. we find it for *–da/dā* in *su**da**rśana* (Coblin 119), *ma**ndā**rava* (Coblin 132), *sa**dā**prarudita* (Coblin 138), *arbu**da*** (Coblin 213), and possibly in *ve**da*** (Coblin 166b); for *-dha/dhā* in *śu**ddhā**vāsa* (Coblin 120), ***dhā**raṇī* (Coblin 151, 239), *viśo**dha*** (Coblin 286), *gan**dhā**laya* (Coblin 139), *nityaga**ndha**pramuditā* (Coblin 140), *ga**ndha**vatī* (Coblin 148), *gan**dha**rva* (Coblin 87), and *gan**dha**hastin* (Coblin 138); for *-ḍa* in *pu**ṇḍa**rīka* (Coblin 208) and *śaśima**ṇḍa**la* (Coblin 180); for *–tra/dra* in *bha**dra**(kalpa)* (Coblin 178, 200, 220, 290), *pūrṇamai**trāyaṇī**putra* (Coblin 46, 126, 258), and *ru**dra*** (Coblin 270); and for geminated nasals in *ki**ṃna**ra* (Coblin 86, 205). Even in some of the relatively rare cases where we find it for unvoiced unaspirated *–ta,* it is associated with a nasal in a cluster: *atya**nta*** (Coblin 166a), *sama**nta*** (Coblin 282) and *ra**tna**ketu* (Coblin 284). However, in three cases is 陀 is used to represent *–ta* alone as it should in **amita-,* in direct contradiction of Iwamatsu's claim that this is impossible: in *tuṣi**ta*** (Coblin 89), *a**ta**pa* (Coblin 102) and *aparāji**ta*** (Coblin 276); though we should possibly also count the geminated *–t-* of *pari**ttā**baha* (Coblin 95). Finally, *avṛha* (Coblin 118) is an interesting case, where it seems to represent simply *–ha.*

These data, therefore, are consistent with Karashima's hypothesis that Lokakṣema was attempting to represent a *prākṛt* form like *amidā'a.* They do not support Iwamatsu's contention that *dâ* was never used to transcribe *-ta.* We can only conclude, therefore, that a careful examination of this evidence shows that Iwamatsu's hypothesis is groundless, and it is most likely that *Amṛta was *not* the original underlying Indic form of the name of Amitābha.

There remains, when these considerations have been disposed of, the evidence of the (later) *Xianzai xian jie qian fo ming jing* 現在賢劫千佛名經 T447, the "Sutra of the Names of the Buddhas

of the [Present] *Kalpa* of the Worthies [*Bhadrakalpa]". We saw above that Iwamatsu shows that in this *sūtra,* which proliferates Buddha names almost *ad infinitum,* both Amita and Amṛta seem to be used as names of Amitābha. This evidence does show, perhaps, that in the later tradition, the association was cemented between Amitābha/Amitāyus, as a kind of "patron Buddha" of long life, and the old notion of "the undying" (*amṛta*). However, it would be anachronistic to follow Iwamatsu in projecting this association back to the very origins of the Amitābha cult. Given that the claim that Buddhas are immortal emerged very strongly in the fourth century at the latest, as we saw in Chapter 5.1, this late information can add little more than an interesting footnote to facts already in hand.

Appendix 4 (to the General Conclusion): Lessons of a brief comparison with the "body (bodies) of Christ"

In this dissertation, I have argued that some idea of the *somatic* realisation of liberation is implicit in many visions of the Buddhist religious ideal, and that a major lesson of the history studied here is that it is inaccurate to allow conceits like "insight", "awakening", "enlightenment" etc. to blind us to the fact that bodily liberation is an important dimension of that ideal. I have also argued that there is a tendency, over the general sweep of the history covered here, for effabilist and eventually fully kataphatic visions of ideal embodiment to be entertained with increasing frequency and freedom over time. Further, it is also possible to argue that one major flaw in prior interpretations of Buddha-body doctrine in previous scholarship is that they have failed to take the notion of "body" serious, that is, they have failed to treat the ideas of the Buddha's embodiment upon which they so exclusively fixated as a genuine claim that the Buddha is substantially, *corporeally* presenced in the world.

In all these senses, then, this dissertation has pushed towards a kind of "re-corporealisation" of our understanding of the corporeal conceit in Buddhism, and an increased recognition of the extent to which positive corporeal corollaries were understood to attend liberation. It is important to recognise, however, against the real possibility that this might be interpreted as an exaggerated claim that the corporeal is equally as important as the gnostic in Buddhism liberation, that the negative evaluation of embodiment remains throughout dominant and fundamental, and by implication, plays like a dark corona around even the most dazzlingly brilliant positive images of ideal embodiment. I would certainly not want the arguments I have advanced in this essay to be understood to comprise an exaggerated claim that the Buddhist vision of perfect realisation is centrally or primarily a vision of a kind of embodiment, therefore.

We can clarify the fundamentally negative attitude of Buddhism to embodiment as such by entertaining briefly a comparison with certain analogous problematics and doctrines in Christianity.[3216] This comparison should also convince us, I will argue, that the underlying

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[3216] I must stress that in considering this comparison between Buddhist and Christian doctrines, I do not wish to suggest by any means that Christianity is somehow a normative reference point with reference which the ideas of "other" cultures should be analysed as a matter of course. As I will suggest below, other important bases of comparison also spring to mind, and are surely relevant. I treat the Christian materials as a case study in the general benefits of comparison, primarily because a set of happy circumstances led to my consideration of this example first and in the most detail.

I was first stimulated to consider the comparison to Christian doctrines by passing comments in Nagao (39-40). Nagao is the only scholar in the secondary literature surveyed here to consider a comparison with Christian doctrines at all (though he acknowledges that he is following Coomaraswamy and Chatterjee. The remarks Nagao cites from these two scholars, however, strike me as somewhat misguided, and indeed, Nagao's brief discussion suggests he, too, is cautious about accepting their arguments. Nagao states, "It may be possible to say that the structure of the *tri-kāya . . .* is akin to the concept of the Trinity in Christianity. For example, A. K. Coomaraswamy says that the *svābhāvika-kāya, sāṃbhogika-kāya,* and *nairmāṇika-kāya* correspond respectively to "the Father", the figure of Christ in Glory", and "the visible Jesus" [referring to A. K. Coomaraswamy, *Buddha and the Gospel of Buddhism,* Bombay etc., 1956, p. 239]. But the way of the Reward-body in which one's vow and discipline have been rewarded, as described above, is especially Buddhistic and seems to be quite removed from the Christian idea." He further cites A. K. Chatterjee, writing in *The Yogācāra Idealism* (230 ff.), suggesting that "among the *trikāya,* the *sāṃbhogikakāya* represents 'the concept of God *par excellence*'" (40). Nagao says, "Chatterjee's opinion . . . can be generally approved, but some supplement may be acceptable. If an expression such as 'a personal God' is applied to Buddhism, the closest equivalent would be the *sāṃbhogika-kāya* or the Reward-body, as Chatterjee says. In this case, the word 'body' of Buddha-body may certainly correspond to 'personality'. But in the ways of such as *svābhāvika-kāya* or *dharma-kāya* there is no theistic personality whatever, although this may depend on how one interprets. For the *svābhāvika-kāya* is a concept which makes *dharma* or *dharmatā* itself as the Buddha-body or Buddha's being. Furthermore, this *dharmatā* or *dharma-dhātu* is something that should be equated with *śūnyatā* or absolute emptiness – herein can be seen the Buddhistic peculiarity of the doctrine of Buddha-body" (loc. cit.). Nagao is right, I believe, to keep the doctrine of emptiness firmly in view in considering any possible analogy to a personal God in Buddha-body doctrine, and he is also right to modulate Chatterjee's unfinessed equation of the *sāṃbhogikakāya* to "God" so that it refers primarily to the *sāṃbhogikakāya* as a possible parallel to the *personal* God, which certainly constitutes a specifically embodied and therefore in some degree "personal" instantiation of Buddhahood. But there are other problems with the ideas he cites with apparent partial approval from Coomaraswamy and Chatterjee. Coomaraswamy's clumsy equation of *trikāya* with the Trinity ignores many important features of both doctrines: most importantly, the circumincession of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, for instance, to which there is no Buddhist parallel; the related fact that *nairmāṇikakāya* is docetistic in its very nature, where docetism was adjudged heresy in Christian orthodoxy; the specific resonances of the familial model in the Father-Son relation; the related fact that Christ represents the advent of Godhood on earth in a way that has no Buddhist parallel; the pivotal role of the crucifixion, that is, a sacrifice of God's son, to any understanding of Christ, and so on. Moreover, the apparently *ad hoc* notion of "the figure of Christ in glory" as an embodiment of divinity in the Christian tradition is vague and tenuous, and it is difficult to know what, if any, specific doctrine Coomaraswamy has in mind. As for the applicability of Nagao's more nuanced reading of Chatterjee to suggest that some parallels exist between the *sāṃbhogikakāya* and the Christian personal God, these may be suggestive as far as they go, but they are arguably tangential at best to the actual problem of *embodiment*. On the whole, as will be apparent from the body of my essay here, I would argue that these comparisons further miss entirely a set of potentially more fruitful comparisons between the two traditions. It seems that these other comparisons are missed in part because Nagao, too, is captive to

problematic of embodiment is a real dimension of human being and experience in the world, and not merely a figment of this or that culturally specific set of religious imaginings.

First, it seems apparent that ideas about and relationships to the body are as fraught with ambivalence and ambiguity in Christianity as they are in Buddhism,[3217] and ordinary embodiment is certainly a deep problem for Christian thought as for Buddhist. This can be seen most clearly in the writings of Paul.[3218] Paul's Christianity is deeply concerned with the body. For him, redemption will be a redemption *of* the entire world, not liberation to some place *beyond* it: "The creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in the hope that *creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay* and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God".[3219] This liberation will also be bodily: "We wait for . . . the redemption *of our bodies*".[3220] In the shadow of this eschatological promise, we can easily read a vision of the present world, and embodiment in it, as profoundly problematic, and that in terms deeply resonant with the Buddhist doctrine of suffering: "the creation was subjected to futility"; it is in "bondage to decay"; "the whole creation has been groaning in labour pains".[3221]

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the assumed centrality of *trikāya* doctrine in conceptions of bodies of the Buddha, and has not considered its relation to the broader problematics I have tried to bring into view in this study.

[3217] See LaFleur for comments on this point.

[3218] I pretend to no expertise in Biblical matters, and I am deeply indebted to my colleague and friend Chris Marshall for pointing me to the materials upon which I base the following discussion, as well as for his great generosity in sharing with me his ideas, in writings published and unpublished and in conversation.

[3219] Romans 8:19-21; my emphasis; this Romans passage cited in Marshall, "Christian Social Responsibility".

[3220] Romans 8:23; my emphasis.

[3221] Romans 8:19-22

As I have argued is the case in Buddhist doctrine, the problematic of the present body in the world is matched in Christian doctrine by various visions of ideal embodiment, the normative counterpart to the descriptive identification of that problem. Most primary among these ideal bodies is the body of the resurrected Christ.

Recent scholarship on the New Testament has begun to emphasise, against a modern tendency to read biblical bodies and especially the body of resurrection in purely symbolic or metaphorical terms, that what we might call "ideal bodies" in the Christian vision are also genuinely corporeal.[3222] Chris Marshall[3223] marshals a range of evidence for the genuine corporeality of Christ's post-resurrection body: it was visible;[3224] it could be touched, and Luke even says it had "flesh and bones";[3225] it could eat and drink;[3226] and it bore the marks of crucifixion.[3227] Marshall argues, to my mind very cogently,[3228] that these qualities of the body of the resurrected Christ, along with a number of other contextual and historical considerations

[3222] I know of these developments through the work of Chris Marshall, but he himself acknowledges that his thinking on this subject is greatly indebted to N. T. Wright's massive *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2003). Chris has suggested (in an unpublished talk at St. John's in the City in Wellington, June 15 2006) that the debate between him and Geering reflects the positions of Wright and John Dominic Crossan respectively, for which see Robert B. Stewart (ed.), *The Resurrection of Jesus: John Dominic Crossan and N.T. Wright in Dialogue* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006). I am sure that the attention I have given to what I have called "corporeal-material" dimensions of Buddha-body doctrine has been stimulated in part by exposure to these ideas, and I am grateful for that stimulus. Of course, acknowledging such an influence, especially from Christianity (when I am a "Western" scholar working on non-Western materials) may expose me to accusations that I have merely foisted an alien problematic on the Buddhist materials. I can only hope that the evidence I have gathered above for my reading shows that the Buddhist materials themselves support my contentions, independent of any parallels to the Christian case.

[3223] Personal communication.

[3224] Matthew 28:7,17; Mark 16:7; Luke 24:24; Jn 20:14; 1 Cor 9:1.

[3225] Luke 24:39, cf. Matthew 28:9; Jn 20:17, 27.

[3226] Luke 24:35,42; Acts 10:41; Jn 21:10-15.

[3227] Luke 24:39; Jn 20:27.

[3228] In his essay "Resurrexit".

too complex to enter into here,[3229] show that whatever we may think of the plausibility or historical veracity of their claims, New Testament writers intend us to understand precisely that Christ, after his resurrection, was possessed of a *body* in some very significant sense.

Marshall is also quick to emphasise, however, that there were also significant, even radical difference between this body and the ordinary body Christ bore before his death and resurrection. Christ could appear or disappear at will,[3230] and enter locked rooms;[3231] and his friends often failed to recognise him,[3232] creating doubt or disbelief.[3233] Most significantly for our discussion here, Christ's new or renewed body was not subject to "corruption" or decay and death.[3234] These considerations have led N. T. Wright to coin the term "trans-physical" to describe the resurrected body of Christ; Marshall evocatively characterises this as "the transformation of materiality into a different key".[3235] We are talking here about a strange and hitherto unknown form of body, that is to say, but a body nonetheless.[3236]

[3229] See "Resurrexit", which draws on arguments by Wright and Dale Allison's careful studies of words translated "resurrection" (*anastasis* and equivalents) to show that, contrary to the arguments of scholars like Geering, these words did not have a wide range of meanings in first-century Palestine, but would have meant to people at the time *bodily* resurrection, and nothing else.

[3230] Luke 24:31, 36; John 20:19, 26.

[3231] John 20:19,26.

[3232] Mark 16:12; Luke 24:16; John 20:14, 16; 21:14.

[3233] Luke 24; 41; Matthew 28:17; John 20:24-29.

[3234] Acts 2:27, 31; 13:34f, 37; 1 Corinthians 15:42-44.

[3235] "Resurrexit".

[3236] The doctrine of the bodily Ascension of Christ into Heaven (Luke 24; Acts 1) also suggests that it is precisely the *body* of Christ that betokens and realises the redemption of which he is the "first fruits".

Paul conceives of this body of Christ "in a new key" as a special property of Christ only in the present. In the future, it is just such a body that the faithful are vouchsafed in his eschatological vision. "Christ's resurrection . . . constitutes the first-fruits of the liberation of the entire created order from its 'bondage to decay'".[3237] Marshall offers a persuasive reading of 1 Corinthians 15 to support this understanding of Paul's message. In this epistle, Paul polemicises against Corinthian pneumatics, who claimed "there was no such thing as the resurrection of the dead".[3238] Indeed, in the end, Paul pins the validity of the entire Christian faith upon the truth of resurrection so defined:

> "Now if there is no resurrection, what will those do who are baptized for the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why are people baptized for them? And as for us, why do we endanger ourselves every hour? . . . . If the dead are not raised, 'Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.'"[3239]

It is clear in this argument that Paul envisages resurrection *of the body* in some sense, and not into some state entirely *de novo*: "This mortal thing must put on immortality," he says.[3240]

In the course of elaborating this argument, Paul makes it clear that just as the body of Christ after resurrection was a body but in some "trans-physical" state, resurrection does not entail the mere resurrection of the "natural body" (*soma psychikon*), but transforms them into "spiritual bodies" (*soma pneumatikon*). Marshall suggests that "Paul himself evidently coined" this term, and further that "many of his hearers would have probably regarded [it] as an oxymoron". It is important to note, especially in a context where Paul is polemicising against a group known to history as "pneumatics", that *pneumatikon* is only half of this term: we must not

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[3237] Marshall, "Resurrexit"; referring to Romans 8:11, 1 Corinthians 14.29; see also 15.20.

[3238] Marshall, referring to 15:12, 35.

[3239] I Corinthians 14.29-32.

[3240] I Corinthians 14.53.

be led into a facile interpretation (mirroring that of secondary scholars of Buddha-body doctrine, who seem often to glibly ignore the very *bodiliness* of *kāya*) that elides the *soma* entirely and sends the spiritual body off into some empyrean utterly divorced from the world. Indeed, it seems to me that the paradoxical notion of a "spiritual body", if we can take the liberty of extracting it from its specifically Pauline environment and making it a generic term, is (like the literally almost identical Buddhist *manomayakāya*) an excellent figure for exactly the contradictory combination of opposites that runs through all the Buddhist doctrines of ideal embodiment, and the deeper "antinomy of immanence" that I see as underlying it.

Beyond these visions of the body of Christ resurrected, and the body promised to Christians at Judgement Day, we can further note that Christianity presents at least four other doctrines or practices regarding the embodiment of Christ that, between them, comprise a range of body doctrines. This range is structurally comparable, as a range of solutions to the problem of embodiment, to the range we have seen in the Buddhist case.

The first of these is the doctrine of the Eucharist as the body of Christ. In the words of the *Catholic Encyclopaedia,* the "words of Institution, 'This is my body – this is my blood'" are "the Church's *Magna Charta*".[3241] "The bread that I will give, is my flesh, for the life of the world".[3242] "The Body given to the Apostles was the self same Body that was crucified on Good Friday, and the Chalice drunk by them, the self same Blood that was shed on the Cross for our sins".[3243] This

[3241] *Catholic Encyclopedia,* s.v. "The Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist".

[3242] John 6:52.

[3243] *Catholic Encyclopedia,* s.v. "The Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist".

doctrine is well supported in the New Testament, and again especially in seminal writings of Paul.[3244]

Second, Christianity also understands the Church to be the body of Christ.[3245] "As all the members of the body whereas they are many, yet are one body, so also is Christ".[3246] Paul even links this "body of the church" with the "body of bread": "We being many, are one bread, one body: for we all partake of that bread".[3247]

Third, as is well known, John asserts that Christ was "the word (*logos*) made flesh": "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth".[3248] This doctrine, in particular, affords a comparison to versions of the doctrine of the *dharmakāya* where *dharma* is understood particularly, or in part, to refer to the *deśanādharma,* the Buddha's teaching of truth; the comparison is interesting, of course, in part for the significant points of contrast it evinces to the Buddhist doctrine.

3244 1 Corinthians 11:23-27.

3245 There is a fascinating parallel here with the notion of *saṃghaśarīra,* which, as we saw above, is a term used at least once in the *Aṣṭa;* see p. 706. It seems, by contrast to the centrality of the corporeal conception of the Church in Christianity, that this conception of the Saṃgha as a body of the Buddha was not particularly widespread; but cf. also the notion of "sons of the Buddha, born of his mouth" etc. studied in §3.2.2.

3246 1 Corinthians 12:12.

3247 1 Corinthians 10:17; cited as the "Greek text" in *Catholic Encyclopaedia,* s.v. "Church".

3248 John 1:14.

Fourth, the worship of relics was a widespread practice in mediaeval Christendom as in Buddhism.[3249] In the Christian case, a particular impasse is posed by the fact that Christ left no bodily remains whatsoever behind on earth, so that relics of Christ (as opposed to the saints) were mostly of other types, e.g. "association" relics. Schopen deals excellently, in various writings, with this Buddhist-Christian comparison, however, and I will not repeat the ground already covered by him here.

Now, I would not wish to imply at all, by my suggestion that these Christian doctrines of ideal bodies of various kinds, that we are dealing with "the same thing" on either side of the often considerable distance that separates Buddhist from Christian religiosity. Quite the contrary. It is a frequent pitfall of comparative endeavours in the study of religion and thought that they rush to translate that the identification of commonalities into supposed universal positive propositions of religious content, and it seems to me that in this case as always, to proceed too simplistically to some putative "common understanding" of the problem of embodiment or its solution(s) between Christian and Buddhist doctrines would do violence, not justice, to the complex ideas on both sides of the comparison.

What I suggest, rather, as I said above, is that, taken as a whole, the constellations of doctrines of ordinary and ideal embodiment in both cases speak to us of a common underlying *problematic*. Despite the acknowledged stark differences in individual ideas about the embodiment of the divine in each case – some of which have no apparent counterpart whatsoever in the other tradition – clearly, *something* at least drove both Christianity and Buddhism to posit various

[3249] Against the entirely valid observations of recent scholars like Schopen pointing to commonalities between the Christian and Buddhist cult of relics, John Strong has recently provided an important and stimulating set of observations about the contrasts that are also found. See his "Buddhist Relics in Comparative Perspective".

senses in which genuine and adequate embodiment of the saviour and realisation of the divine in the world was possible. How are we to account for this common trope?

In answer to this common problematic, moreover, both traditions propose a *range* of ideal embodiments of the divine, in which we can also perceive certain broad similarities. The body of Christ resurrected, for instance, is a sign to the world of the eschatological promise of universal resurrection of believers (it is a symbol that conveys the truth to the world), and also the form in which Christ enjoys his own perfected state in and for himself (as the Buddha his *svābhāvikakāya*). Against this latter aspect of the body of Christ resurrected, the body of Christ as Eucharist, the body as Church, and Christian relics represent forms in which the divine power of Christ is available to others, i.e. to ordinary believers, in a manner that echoes what I have called "altruistic" interpretations of the Buddha's ideal embodiments (as in relics, for instance, or some aspects of the *sāṃbhogikakāya,* as I will argue below).

We could of course pursue these comparisons much further, but this much should suffice to make the general methodological point that concerns me here.

In light of this common ground between the two traditions, it is clearly impossible to argue (*pace* the glib references we often hear to "Western hang-ups", for example) that our ordinary given embodiment in this world is entirely a problem peculiar to either Buddhism or Christianity; and this observation should spur us to consider carefully the resonance of this problem beyond its particular articulation in the specificities of one tradition or another.

Beyond the identification of this common underlying problematic, I believe the thrust of this comparison drives most trenchantly to the identification of significant *differences* between the

two traditions, in both the understanding of the problem and the solutions proposed for it. To give just a few examples from the material surveyed above, with allowances for the usual problems of such broad generalisation:

> In Christianity, we note, "the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it".[3250] In Buddhism, on the other hand, the problem is rooted in our own ignorance, craving and aversion.

> The centrality of the gruellingly corporeal crucifixion[3251] and the present resurrection of Christ to Christian faith, and the promised future resurrection of believers, arguably betoken a Christian focus upon embodiment as a vehicle or site of redemption that is more radical than anything we find in Buddhism. Redemption further comes to the Christian devout by the saving grace of Christ. In Buddhism, on the other hand, the emphasis is most archetypically upon direct, subjective realisation of the truth, an appropriate antigen to nescience as the root of ill.

> In the Christian vision, Christ is embodied in a Eucharist that rehearses and re-presences his sacrifice upon the cross, and the grace of that redemptive act is incorporated by believers in a literal ritual ingestion; the Church, as a body of Christ, is as Paul asserts incorporated by the common bond of this *prima facie* scandalous relation

[3250] Romans 8:20.

[3251] Mel Gibson's sensational *Passion of Christ* can of course be understood as a sustained cinematic contemplation of the bloody torture undergone by Christ. The way this contemplation insists the physicality of the crucifixion would surely have been far less alien or repugnant to many mediaeval people than it has proven to modern observers, and furnishes a parallel for the impulse in recent theology to reinscribe the concrete somaticity of the resurrected body of Christ in Christian discourse.

> to the fruits of that horrendous scene. Unless it be in Tantrism, there is no analogy that I know of in Buddhism to this astounding idea.
>
> In John, Christ as *logos* is prior to the entire drama of Christ's earthly biography, and assumes the flesh in an act of mercy. While there are some faint echoes of elements of this notion in the doctrine of a "primal Buddha" (*ādibuddha*) and the docetistic vision of the twelve acts of all Buddhas as a salvific theatre, it is notable that in Buddhism, the direction of identification from *dharma* to Buddha primarily flows in the other direction, whereby the teaching by which the Buddha articulates the truth he has realised is an equivalent for him after the fact.

Contrasts abound, therefore, and the centre of gravity in the overall paradigm of embodiments on each side of the comparison is significantly different.

At the risk of being thought a snake-oil purveyor of crass dichotomies (a risk I hope to stave off immediately below), it seems to me that it is possible to distil from these contrasts some general differences in emphasis between the two traditions I am comparing here, and that these contrasts moreover suggest that there is a grain of truth in some old stereotypes recently fallen into disrepute.

The radical Christian emphasis on redemption of creation and redemption in a bodily state for all (believers), by contrast to the Buddhist emphasis on *saṃsāra* as a vale of woe and total deliverance from it as the salvific goal, suggests that Christianity on the whole holds out the promise of a greater value for this world than Buddhism, at least in its vision of eschatological prospects if not of our present condition. The emphasis in Christianity on salvation by the

"other-power" (*tali* 他力) of Christ on the cross, by contrast to the Buddhist emphasis on the personal realisation of gnosis (*jñāna*), suggests that on the whole (though with many significant and well-known caveats) Buddhism requires more that aspirants "help themselves". The fact that in Mahāyāna, at least, a docetistic reading of the Buddha's earthly career became widely accepted, while in Christianity docetism only ever remained heretical and unorthodox, is a useful index of these basic differences in tendency. The Buddha only needed to intrude lightly in the world, in order to convey gnostic content by preaching; Christ, on the other hand, intervened radically, somatically and cataclysmically in human history, and his act ushered in a new cosmic age. Finally, the Christian understanding that Christ's death on the cross was significant in part as the death of the only Son of a personal God; the correlate Johannine doctrine that birth of Christ into the world was assumption of the flesh by the *logos* sent by the Father; the centrality to Christian practice of the re-enactment of the pivotal scene of that drama in the Eucharist; these all remind us that Christianity is predicated upon the existence of a creator God who intervenes actively and mysteriously in His creation, while by contrast, the Buddhist emphasis on insight into the nature of reality presupposes a much less labile true state of affairs, to which the power of salvation (gnosis) is in some sense a passive observing partner rather than a radically intervening force.

I would not want the drawing of contrasts to be subsumed under a facile generalisation to the effect that "Christianity and Buddhism are essentially different". This would merely lead us back into the stereotypical black-and-white caricatures of traditions that have bedevilled much previous work, and enough dire warnings about the dangers of essentialisation have surely been pronounced in recent years to steer us away from that path.

I would argue, rather, that it is precisely as centres of gravity, or general tendencies, that contrasts like these are interesting. Much more importantly, since it does not merely recapitulate old stereotypes, it is important, while recognising these centres of gravity, to analyse the ideal embodiments proposed as remedies to the problem of embodiment in each tradition *as a spectrum,* or a range, or a loose gaggle of competing conceptions. Such an analysis leads us to the further observation that in the shadow of these dominant tendencies we regularly find thriving significant subordinate tendencies, and that the contours of the *field comprised by* majority and minority strands combined, on other side of the comparison, bear witness to significant common ground. Thus, for example, if gnosticism, however "unorthodox", was a constant vital presence in the Christian tradition; or if a related docetism, even if ultimately declared heretical, was a significant position at least one point in Christian history, we have found a major point of intersection with Buddhism, where a one-eyed emphasis on the "essential", or dominant tendencies, would have us gloss over that intersection entirely.

Thus, even in the space of a short comparative exercise like this one, I hope it has been possible to support my claim that comparison, rather than leading to the point-by-point opposition of stereotyped essentialisms, can more profitably lead to a twin lesson: (1) the identification of a common underlying problematic and an at least partially overlapping overall field of possible responses to that problematic; (2) significant differences of emphasis, or centres of gravity, within that overall common landscape, on either side of the comparison.

I opened this short essay by referring to several respects in which this dissertation has shown that liberation was a more corporeal matter in Buddhism than we might have thought (the frequent presence of corporeal corollaries to gnostic liberation; the general increased tendency

to effabilist and then kataphatic visions of ideal embodiment over the first millennium of this history; the fact that the corporeality of the corporeal conceit in these ideas must be taken seriously, as representing a genuine corporealisation in the world). I also noted, however, that though this strand of real corporeal liberation is strong, it is nonetheless not the dominant strand in Buddhist ideas about the religious ideal, which remain predominantly negative about embodiment as such. Ideas about the "somatics of liberation" – the notion of a possibility of a perfect, adequate, positive embodiment – which have been the focus of this dissertation, therefore never go beyond the status of a countervailing current, constantly travelling in the shadow of a larger orthodoxy; and as such, they are Buddhist counterparts to such marginal positions in the Christian world as docetism and gnosticism. As in the converse case, therefore, the comparison with Christianity can help cast additional light on dimensions of the spectrum of possibility to which Buddhism did not develop the problematic in question, and therefore ultimately help us to interpret the significance of the Buddhist positions more accurately than we could do if we treated them in isolation.

The most important lesson I wish to draw from the present exercise, however, is that there is a genuine common and real problematic at issue in both cases – that in cases like that of embodiment, comparison can show us that we are not dealing entirely with a mere imaginative figment of this or that tradition alone. What else could account for engagement with similar problems in two traditions that developed the ideas concerned in historical isolation from one another? Such enquiry, I believe, leads directly towards the recognition that religious and philosophical problematics are shaped by the real nature of our world and our existential situation within it. That is to say, if central problems and conceits, and the range of possibilities demarcated by multiple positions on both sides of a cultural divide, evince such underlying similarities, these similarities are the products of constant and real features of the

being in the world of the people who elaborate those problems, conceits and positions. As I argued in the General Introduction to this dissertation (esp. Ch. 1.3), the recognition and careful delineation of such central problematics is the proper eventual task of intellectual history and philosophy, and in it lies the potential for a kind of "metaphilosophy" or "meta-religion" by cross-cultural comparison, which promises to lead us to a less parochial general philosophy that escapes at least the most obvious pitfalls of cultural particularism.

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